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STEPHEN MARSHALL

A FORGOTTEN ESSEX PURITAN

E. VAUGHAN

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STEPHEN MARSHALL





FINCHINGFIELD



THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, FINCHAM

STEPHEN MARSHALL

A FORGOTTEN ESSEX PURITAN

BY E. VAUGHAN

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TO  
THE DEAR MEMORIES OF  
MATTHEW VAUGHAN  
(SOMETIME VICAR OF FINCHINGFIELD)  
AND  
ELIZA, HIS WIFE  
THEIR DAUGHTER DEDICATES THIS  
LITTLE BOOK





## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

*To face  
page*

Plate I	Finchingfield: The Church .	<i>Frontispiece</i>	
Plate II	The Old Vicarage . . . . .		26
Plate III	Finchingfield Church: The Nave; the Berner's Chapel; the West Door. The Yeld Hall . . . . .		28
Plate IV	A page of the Town Book . . . . .		38
Plate V	Spains Hall; the Fish Stews; Brent Hall; the Old Poor House . . . . .		56
Plate VI	Weathersfield Church; Duck End; Shalford Church *; Lees Priory . . . . .		72

\* The photograph of Shalford Church is by Mr. A. W. Brunwin; the other three on Plate VI. are by Mr. H. T. Lawson, of Braintree; and the remainder by the Publisher.



## CHAPTER I

"A worthy, sober man."—*Baxter*, in 1654.

"That Mr. Marshall was a faithful servant of God . . .  
I doubt not. That he was perfect . . . I affirm not."

*Giles Firmin.*

FEW more complicated problems present themselves to the thoughtful student of English history than the arrival at a definite conclusion respecting the individual integrity of those eminent men who swayed the world of religious and political thought throughout the stormy upheaval of the seventeenth century. And the reason is not far to seek. For in the controversial conflict that raged on all sides with equal bitterness, the weapon of personal abuse and unjust imputation was so freely made use of that to denounce an opponent as a rogue and a reprobate seemed but fair play even to such as John Milton, rendering it now a most intricate task to clear away the smoke of wordy battles across the centuries and see the combatants in their true light.

It is probable that not many personalities have been more obscured in the eyes of subsequent

generations by this mud-throwing process than that of the illustrious puritan, Stephen Marshall, aptly styled by Dean Stanley "the Primate of the Presbyterian Church." Of his distinguished career and undoubted abilities as an orator, administrator and leader of religious thought there is no question ; it is open for all to read in the pages of his contemporary opponents and admirers alike. In this brief and necessarily fragmentary biography it is proposed to throw some light on the man rather than the theologian, especially when dealing with that portion of his life spent apart from political turmoil in the remote Essex village of Finchingfield.

And here it may be interesting to note in passing that besides local sources of information hitherto uninvestigated, the two most valuable records of Marshall's individual character have come down to us from very different points of view. One is an anonymous "Life," written twenty-four years after his decease with the evident purpose of holding up the dead preacher to the contempt of an age that knew not puritanism. This account, called in bitter satire "The Godly Man's Legacy to the Saints upon Earth," abounds in that personal invective to which reference has been made, intermixed with much that possesses some element of truth behind the slander. The unknown author appears to have known Stephen Marshall, and is evidently well acquainted with

Finchingfield and its neighbourhood, but writes with eyes so blinded by party passion, and with such utter disregard for accuracy, that the wrong done to the memory of a great man would have been irreparable but for the other contemporary witness, a quaint and quietly written tract published in reply by Giles Firmin, the ejected minister of an adjoining parish. This good man was apparently one of those rare individuals to whose blameless life friend and foe alike bore testimony. In his younger days he had practised his original calling of a physician for many years in New England, whither he had accompanied a body of puritan colonists from East Anglia. Returning to his native land during the closing years of the Civil War, he entered the ministry, and settled down as the ideal country pastor, ministering to the souls and bodies of his rural flock in the picturesque village of Shalford. On the fatal "Black Bartholomew's Day" of 1662, he left his home, with his wife and seven children, and went to reside at Ridgwell, where he resumed his medical profession, until, in 1697, he died, honoured and beloved by all, at the ripe old age of eighty-three.

He tells us, in the "Brief Vindication" of his dead friend, how, not content with his own intimate knowledge of Marshall, he journeyed to Finchingfield, about seven miles from Ridgwell, to make "diligent enquiry." "There," he says, "as the providence of God ordered it, I met with one



very aged person, truly pious, who had intimate relations with Mr. Marshall from his first coming into Essex . . . dwelt always near him, kept in his house for several weeks together, and knew all the order of his family ; I judge no better person than this to enquire of, the person being very aged." The two elderly worthies then perused together with mutual indignation the pages of the offending "Life"—"this ugly brat" as Firmin calls it—and the result was the little time-stained pamphlet that now rests in the Library of the British Museum.

But to return to Marshall himself. Nothing about his early days held any promise of future distinction. He was born at Godmanchester, near Huntingdon, in the year 1594, of lowly parentage, his father being a glover by trade, and very poor. The boy and his sister were often sent out into the fields to assist the scanty larder by gleaning corn. No record exists to tell us how Stephen obtained his education. We only know that "having got so much Latin Grammar as his poverty and industry would attain unto," he matriculated at Cambridge in 1615, entering Emmanuel College as a pensioner on March 14, 1616, remaining there until taking his B.A. degree in 1618. He subsequently became an M.A. in 1622, and a B.D. in 1629.

Emmanuel was at this time one of the leading puritan Colleges in a puritan University. The



large body of Essex "Lecturers" who fell under the displeasure of Laud and his predecessors were all Cambridge men, and chiefly from Emmanuel or Sidney College ; those "nurseries of Puritanism," as the irate Prelate called them, "from whence come these People's Creatures," to "blow the Bellows of their Sedition."

In the same year that Marshall left the University, after a short residence in Suffolk as a private tutor, he became an ordained minister of the Church of England, and was presented to the lectureship of Weathersfield, in Essex. This appointment had become vacant by the death of the venerable Richard Rogers, who had held it for forty-six years, faithfully upholding his puritan principles, in spite of being several times suspended by the predecessors of Laud. His tomb is still to be seen near the north porch of his village church, but the moss-grown lengthy inscription has become illegible.

It is not always an enviable position for a newly ordained cleric to follow in the immediate footsteps of an able and much respected predecessor, but Stephen Marshall soon appears to have won the hearts of all his congregation, who presented him with "a Library at the cost of Fifty pounds"—a large sum in those days—exact-  
ing from him in return a promise that he would not leave them. Already the young lecturer was showing promise of those great oratorical powers

for which he was to become so justly noted in after years, and the story of the effect wrought by his preaching upon a heedless country gentleman of the period is recorded in the pages of old Giles.

There is little doubt that the personal appearance of Stephen was not prepossessing ; his face was rugged and plain, and the study of pulpit elegance he would have scorned. So it befell that when—"thick shouldered," with "Shackling Gait," and large burning eyes "rowling in his Heade"—he made his appearance in the pulpit of Weathersfield Church, the awkward set of his cloak, and his more awkward struggles to set it right, were a source of infinite amusement to a certain Mr. Wiltshire, who, says Firmin, "observing him, says to another Headborough of the town that sat by him, in a scoffing manner, *Look, Look, he shakes his Shoulders, we shall have something anon.* Then Mr. Marshall went to prayer ; after he had been awhile in his Prayer, *Ay, but listen,* says Mr. Wiltshire, *do you hear how he prays ?* Prayer being ended, he went to preaching ; his text was Matt. v. 20. Mr. Wiltshire's comb was cut, his Jollity was taken down by that sermon. The next time he came, the text was Matt. vii. 13, 14. This sermon knocked him quite down, God struck home, this Scoffer now is changed." A subsequent sermon on Romans v. 7 brought him "much Refreshing Settlement," and

at the close of the service "Mr. Marshall going out at the Chancel door, Mr. Wiltshire met him, and told him, *and thou shalt be my adopted son*, and soon took him from Mr. Langden's, where he boarded, to himselfe, with whom he continued about a yeare."

This convenient arrangement was in all probability brought to a termination by Stephen Marshall's marriage, which took place during his residence at Weathersfield. His choice fell upon Susanna Castell, "a gentlewoman of considerable fortune," whose home lay some twenty miles away, in the hilly and beautiful village of Woodham Walter, near Danbury. This fair puritan was one who commanded the respect even of Marshall's unfriendly biographer. He especially commends her for not being of "a Politic Reache," and for never wanting the "Ornaments of a Meeke and Quiet Spirit." From the same source we are sarcastically informed, and probably with some truth, as Giles Firmin does not contradict it, that the lady, who appears to have been staying in Stephen's neighbourhood, was "enamoured" not with "the comliness of his Person, but ravished with the zealous delivery of his Sermons . . . For whatever good his preaching does upon Men's Souls it works mightily upon Women's Affections." In this instance, at all events, the attraction of the pulpit worked so "mightily" upon the heart of Susanna that it

became impossible for her to conceal the state of her feelings, and the admiration she entertained for the young preacher becoming apparent to some of her female friends, they hastened to convey a tactful hint to that good man of the happiness that might be in store for him, if his heart should incline towards the damsel. The affection was evidently mutual, and Stephen hastened to act upon the suggestion, wooing the lady "in the Language of Canaan," and so without difficulty winning her. "For," says the malicious old chronicler, with an evident pun on Susanna's surname, "a Castle is never hard to take where the Gates stand open without a Sentinel."

Thus did Stephen Marshall take unto himself a wife and settle down for the next four or five years in his Weathersfield home. But when three little daughters had made their appearance upon the domestic hearth, a change came in the lives of the worthy pair, occasioned by their removal to the adjoining village of Finchingfield.

This living—valued in those days at £200 a year, and much sought after—became vacant in September 1625 by the death of its minister, "Thomas Pickeringe—Vicarius ille dignissimus," as the old register calls him. The parish is still one of the largest in Essex, and in those days—long before a goodly sized hamlet had been separated from the parent church—the circum-



ference was estimated to have been thirty-five miles, with a population in proportion, and containing some notable families, whose picturesque old houses still remain more or less intact.

Foremost amongst these was Spains Hall, the home of William Kempe, the patron of the living, whose ancestors had held it in possession for three hundred years, and who were no doubt the original builders of the main part of the fine old Tudor residence as it stands to-day. The representative of this ancient family, during the early years of the seventeenth century, was a strange and morose being, with an iron will, and probably a somewhat disordered brain. Subject to fits of violent and unreasonable passion, he on one occasion uttered an unwarrantable accusation against his wife, Phillipa, and—upon becoming sensible of the gross injustice he had done her—formed a stern resolution to hold his peace from that day forward, maintaining his vow "with voluntary constancy" for the space of seven years. According to local tradition he marked each year with the formation of a fish "stew," the remains whereof are still to be seen, and although the recent discovery of an ancient map in the cellar of Spains Hall points to a somewhat earlier date than the term of the vow, it leaves no doubt but that William Kempe was the designer of these beautiful sheets of water lying one behind

the other in the densely wooded plantation that still skirts the park. Many are the curious tales handed down in the old village respecting this extraordinary vow, and various forms of tragedy and misfortune foretold by a Finchingfield wizard called "The Raven" are recorded to have befallen Kempe during the period of silence, including serious accidents to himself, the loss by drowning in the fishponds of three of his servants, and, as a direct consequence of his refusal to speak, the sacking of his home by a wild gang of robbers, during which desperate deed a little boy was murdered, whose small spirit—it was firmly believed—haunted from henceforth the scene of his untimely death.

According to local tradition it is also supposed that Kempe never again held converse with mortal ears, but died vainly struggling to utter a word at the exact termination of the seven years. This, however, is incorrect, as the valuable information given us by Giles Firmin proves, confirming at the same time the main truth of this strange story, and the magnetic power of Stephen Marshall's kindly influence. He tells us how, upon the death of "Mr. Pickeringe, a learned and reverend Divine . . . the Patron of the Living (so swallowed up with a Melancholy Phrensie that he neither went to Church nor spoke to any Person for several years, but always signified his mind by writing) had suitors indeed for the Living ; some

earnest for Mr. Daniel Rogers, others for Mr. Lee. Mr. Kempe the Patron would hear of none ; after they had long urged him, he grew much displeased, and wrote : *They did but go about to shorten his life by giving him this trouble, no man should have it but Mr. Marshall.* . . . Mr. Marshall sought not the living, nor any for him, but for others ; the Patron resolves (moved from no other but his own pleasure) that none shall take it but Mr. Marshall, who when he came to the Living, soon wrought upon his Patron to converse with men by his Tongue, lay by his Pen, brought him to Public Worship, hundreds of spectators wondering to see him come to Church : I think it an honour to Mr. Marshall."

It is to be regretted that this happy change had come too late to be any comfort to Phillipa, who, two years previously, had exchanged the miserable silence of her earthly home for the stillness of eternity. She was "of Chaste Life, and Religion, Discreet in both," as her epitaph records ; the latter quality being doubtless one necessary of cultivation in her difficult life. Her eccentric husband lived for nearly three years after the arrival of Stephen Marshall. He was ultimately taken with a fit one summer morning in 1628, and after fruitless efforts to make his wishes known—his will being unmade—the obstinate old man passed away the same evening at the age of seventy-three years. Marshall was no doubt



present at his death-bed, and a few days later committed his mortal remains to rest by Phillipa's side in the old family vault.

Robert Kempe, his nephew, a cultured and refined puritan of the more moderate type, came into possession of Spains Hall, and lived there for thirty-five years, to be a source of blessing to Finchingfield. Artistic in spite of his creed, he beautified his ancient home with curiously wrought water pipes, which not only remain until this day, but their function of conveying superfluous water from the roof is in perfect working order. The chancel roof was rebuilt at his "Pious Charge," and in 1635 a venerable building called the "Yeldhall"—the headquarters of the Trinity Guild in pre-Reformation days—was bestowed upon the village as an almshouse, and still continues to be as comfortable a shelter for aged village dames as in the seventeenth century. Robert Kempe received the order of knighthood from the Long Parliament in 1624, and was one of the elders under the presbyterian system, but he never appears to have taken any active part in the conflict of this time. He lived to see the restoration of the monarchy, dying in the autumn of 1663, and leaving behind him a name worthy to be had in remembrance.

Brent Hall, now a quaint old farm-house, about half a mile from Spains Hall, was then the residence of Edward Bendlowes, the great-grandson

of William Bendlowes, an Elizabethan Serjeant-at-Law, whose memory was much revered for the many pious benefactions he had bequeathed to no less than seven parishes, including Finchingsfield and his own native village of Great Bardfield. His descendant was chiefly distinguished for his great extravagance of living, combined with "proficiency in Elegant Literature." He was on intimate terms with celebrated writers and poets of the day, including Francis Quarles, whose curious "Emblems" is said to have been chiefly composed at Brent Hall; tradition even pointing out a nook in the garden under an old wall as the scene of his labours. In one edition of the "Emblems," a map of the world occurs on the title-page, but only four places are recorded as worthy of notice, Finchingsfield being one. Bendlowes himself published a "Divine Poem" . . . with parts thereof made to fit Aires, called "Theophila," and several other productions of a like nature. In 1657, his imprudence "in matters of Worldly Concern" not only necessitated the sale of Brent Hall, but landed him for a time in a debtor's prison at Oxford, in which city he continued to reside for some years "in obscure condition," yet "much admired by great men for his ancient Extraction, Education, and Partes"; until, "for want of Conveniences fit for old age . . . he marched off in a cold season, on the eighteenth of December at eight of the Clocke

at night, Anno Domini 1676, aged seventy-three yeares or more."

Another prominent puritan household with whom Marshall was on terms of friendly intimacy was that of the Meades, owners of Nortofts and Sculpins, two ancient houses standing some distance from the village, Nortofts being situated on the highway to Weathersfield, and Sculpins on what is now a lonely district to the north, only to be reached by a bridle path or a deeply sunk lane. The latter place appears to have been the usual family residence, for we read of Stephen as being a constant visitor there ; continually, says his disparaging biographer, "sucking in the air at Sculkins." The house was famed throughout the county for its open-handed hospitality, a reputation that it maintained to the end of the eighteenth century. "Mr. Meade," says Giles Firmin, "was the second Liberal Gentleman in Essex, and there were such a succession of Strangers, especially Ministers, to his house that none need fear an unaired Bed."

Three generations inhabited Sculpins during the period of Marshall's ministry, but the most celebrated was John, the grandson of George Meade, who had purchased the estate in 1602, and died in 1629. He was succeeded by his son John, whose wife was a victim to religious depression, amounting to mania. After her husband's death—which took place about 1640—she continued to

reside with her son at Sculpins, where her distress was completely cured by the spiritual ministrations of Stephen Marshall. Calamy tells us that she was "under great trouble about the Concern of her Soul, and for some time would not go to Church, though she us'd to love to go thither. She now said, *what should she do there, it would but increase her damnation*, but being over persuaded, and almost forced into the Coach by her son-in-law, Mr. Brown and others, she heard Mr. Marshall, and was by that Sermon so exceedingly satisfy'd that she came home transported with joy."

John Meade, her son, took an active part in the religious alterations of the period, being one of the ten appointed by the Earl of Manchester, in 1643, to form the Essex Committee for the suppressing of "Scandalous Ministers," a somewhat unhappily wide term for many an unfortunate vicar, as it was also made to include all "any waies ill affected to the Parliament." John's connections by marriage were of a strictly puritan type, his wife being second cousin of the Protector, and a first cousin of Sir John Barrington, of Hatfield Broadoak.

Sculpins is so interwoven with Marshall's village life that it may be interesting here to note briefly its subsequent history. Upon the death of John Meade, about the year 1664, his estates passed into the hands of his two daughters, and were divided among them by lot, Nortofts falling



to the share of Joan, the wife of Roger Rant, and Sculpins to Dorothy, who had married John Marshall, a loyal courtier, descended from the Earls of Pembroke, and knighted in 1681, upon his presenting an address to Charles II. from the County of Essex. But, notwithstanding her husband's opinions and his position as a Justice of the Peace, Dame Dorothy nobly maintained the puritan traditions of her race. For four or five years after the passing of the Five Mile Act, in 1665, the old Manor-House of Sculpins, "whither Mr. Stephen Marshall us'd to come very frequently," became the home and shelter of five nonconformist ministers, "that eminent Divine," Mr. Samuel Fairclough, his two sons, and two sons-in-law. Permission was also given them to preach by turns in the family and to any of the neighbours who came in to benefit by the exhortations of this goodly "Constellation of Stars," which, says Calamy, "being now in all Conjunction, drew the Eyes of much People into the Corner upon them." The same writer describes the elder Fairclough as "a Boanerges in the Pulpit, . . . Judicious and Moving, yet, withall, a man of Greate Gravity, tempered with a Surprising Sweetness." The old puritan subsequently ended his days at Stowmarket in 1677, aged seventy-seven, at the "Habitation of his Daughter," whose husband had conformed and become vicar of the little Suffolk town.

Dame Dorothy died in 1685, leaving an only daughter. Sir John married a second time and had two sons, the younger of whom succeeded his father at Sculpins, where he lived until his death, at the latter end of the eighteenth century. There he maintained such lavish hospitality that local tales are still repeated in the village of his famous bowling parties, whereunto all the gay and fashionable world resorted every week, and his ponderous coach, drawn by four powerful grey horses, that used to crash down the now green bridle-path to the church on bygone Sabbaths.

At the present day but a fragment of Sculpins remains, inhabited by a labourer, and a strange silence, only broken by the singing of the birds in the stately elms by the old moat, pervades the deserted scene. The boisterous revelry of the cock-pit and the bowling-green, as well as the solemn assemblies of the divines, and the fair presence of Dame Dorothy, have alike passed away as a tale that is told.

More regrettable still has been the fate that befell the picturesque old Elizabethan vicarage which for twenty-six years was the home of Stephen Marshall. The venerable yew trees that overshadow the sloping lawn were doubtless already in existence when the "quiet" Susanna, and her probably not quiet children, walked and

played in the beautiful garden, or tended herbs and "simples." But the still waters of the pond have ceased for many years to reflect back the long deep roof and quaint gables of the ancient building, which met its doom at the hands of a perverted modern taste in the year 1841, when a modern edifice arose in its stead. In the old vicarage four of Marshall's seven children were born ; three daughters, named Mary, Martha, and Elizabeth, and the only son, "Steven."

Contrary to the custom of the times, the "free and sociable Humour" that so excited the wrath of Marshall's opponents manifested itself on the vexed question of juvenile discipline. The writer of the "Godly Man" accuses him of "being a most indulgent father," and adds, with scornful malice, that the greater portion of the young Marshalls' education consisted in "going from one good House to another to eat Cheese-cakes and Custards." According to his account "they were Gentlewomen in nothing but their Habits, and therein they exceeded persons of good Degree and Quality. They followed the Light of Fashion with Changeable Taffetas and Naked Necks, insomuch that the Godly Party were sorely scandalized, but durst not complain, because it was Mr. Marshall who was concerned."

Giles Firmin, in alluding to this—no doubt very exaggerated—account, confesses that there was a great parental indulgence, for which—and for



FRONT VIEW



BACK VIEW

THE OLD VICARAGE



Marshall's "facetiousness"—some blamed him, yet proceeds to add that "in his children he had more comfort than many . . . for some were Pious, and the rest Hopeful." The advance of Stephen's mind upon the social ideas of that day is also shown by the fact that he settled his wife's estate absolutely upon her during her life, with power to dispose of it as she pleased at her death.

The church destined to hear that "unrivalled eloquence," for which its pastor was famous alike with town and country audiences, was then as now one of the finest and most interesting in the county. It stands on the summit of a steep hill, overlooking the village and surrounding neighbourhood, little altered in appearance from the seventeenth century to the present time, with the exception of a lofty spire that must have been a landmark for miles, and which was in existence until the autumn of 1659, four years after Marshall's death. Then, in that furious gale of wind and storm that raged throughout England for three days, during what an old historian calls "Cromwell's exit," the grand spire was hurled down with a mighty crash, never to be rebuilt, and is represented to-day by a Georgian lantern.

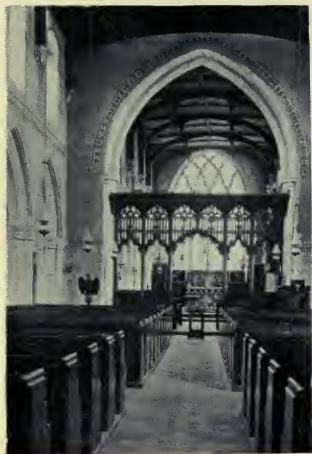
Like the parish, the church is a large one, and having been built or altered at various times, it contains specimens of almost every style of architecture, from the massive Norman of the tower to the graceful tracery of the Decorated and Perpen-

dicular periods. And it is greatly to the honour of its puritan vicar that in spite of the Parliamentary Order for the removal of all crucifixes and "Scandalous pictures," the fifteenth-century doors still retain their deeply cut carvings of the pelican feeding her young from the life-blood in her breast, with many another half-obliterated device, including a crucifix over the massive iron handle. The beautiful altar tomb of John Berners, with the eight stone figures of little monks in niches, its brasses depicting the said John and Elizabeth his wife, and the devout petition cut in the same material at their feet—"quorum animabus propiciator Deus"—was left unmolested, although of the priceless painted glass alluded to in Berner's will as the "wyndow of Mare Magdalen" not a fragment remains. It was probably swept away with the rood loft in the reign of Edward VI. Marshall even left uninjured an effigy of the Virgin Mary on an altar tomb of grey marble, as well as another in the chancel depicting an ecclesiastic in sacerdotal habit, Nicholas Colem, by name, Vicar of Finchingfield, in the fourteenth century. But the more ruthless hand of the modern restorer has destroyed these two latter relics of antiquity, and only their description remains in an early eighteenth-century MS. "History of Essex," now preserved in Colchester Museum.

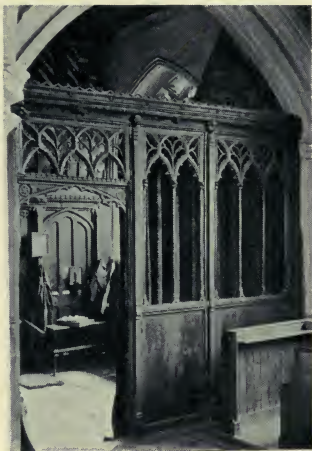
A beautiful Perpendicular rood-screen stretches



THE NAVE



THE BERNERS' CHAPEL



THE WEST DOOR



THE YELD HALL



across the chancel arch, and a still more perfect specimen of Decorated work, ornamented with grotesque figures in fourteenth-century costume, may be seen at the entrance to John Berner's "Chapell." Of the pulpit in use during Marshall's ministry there is no trace, the three-decker removed in 1865 being doubtless the product of a later day. But a massive oaken table handed down for generations in the family of a village tailor, until in 1886 it became the property of the writer, has been pronounced upon antiquarian authority to be an original puritan Communion Table. If so, this was probably the one used by Stephen Marshall ; its comparatively square shape— $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet by  $2\frac{1}{2}$ —rendering it convenient for removal to the body of the church, where the Sacrament was usually administered in those days, in spite of Laud's efforts to secure the railed in position at the east end. In fact, over this point, with the sign of the cross in baptism, and the use of the surplice, raged most of the bitter theological struggles ; and it is difficult to understand in these days the intense hatred of the puritan mind to the "foolish rayles," as they are called in some contemporary verses of an Essex poet.

As a country pastor Marshall was evidently respected and "well beloved by his people," a fact which even the "Godly Man" has to admit, adding that "till he began to meddle with State

affairs . . . his greatest ambition was to gain them," suiting himself to "the meanest Capacity," and preaching "Catechistical Divinity in plain and familiar Expressions;" also being well acquainted with "Vulgar Proverbs and odd County Phrases and Bye words . . . to sprinkle up and down in his Sermons," he "Captivated the People at a Strange Rate." In alluding to this description, Firmin adds, "Well might he commend him for the excellent discharge of his Pastoral Relations . . . he had few in England like him . . . for plainness and clearness, none like him."

In latter days he "preached much abroad," insisting on "Notional Divinity, and the many Privileges of the Saints," and "spread his Butter very thin." According to Marshall's own reckoning he had preached on an average three times a week from his ordination to nearly the end of his days. This did not necessarily imply the composition of fresh material; one much appreciated discourse for example, called "Merox Cursed," being delivered no less than fifty times.

Among his "homely similitudes" occurs a curious natural history observation, showing the havoc wrought at the period by that now almost extinct bird of prey, the kite. The preacher watches the "Hen goe clocking and scraping in the midst of her Chickens; then comes the Kite and snatcheth away first one, then another . . . till all are gone, and the Hen brustles and flutters



. . . but returns to her scraping and picking." Stories of this mischievous bird are still handed down in Finchingfield, but for many years the "puttocks"—as they are locally called—have ceased to exist in Essex.

The ministerial functions of a seventeenth-century vicar were by no means confined to the cure of souls ; the material needs of human bodies and the regulation of village life also came largely under his care, as administrator of the poor law in co-operation with the churchwardens, overseers, surveyors of "the high weyes," constables, and other officers yearly elected at the Easter Vestry.

The system then in operation was the "old Poor Law" of Elizabeth, drawn up in 1597 and re-enacted in 1609. It was moulded on the same lines as previous acts had been from the time of Richard II downward, the fundamental principle being the "reliefs of impotent poore people . . . the settinge to worke of such poore people as being able to worke have no . . . means to employ themselves ; the compellinge of such lazie persons to worke as being of bodies able and stronge doe nevertheless refuse to laboure, the maintenance of hospitalls and other places for the reliefe of poore people, and . . . the repressinge of drunkennesse."

It was practically a system of enforced labour for all but the "impotente" and aged ; the alter-

native to the sturdy beggar being an unpleasant promenade through the nearest market town "tyde to the end of a carte . . . and beten with whippes throughout the same." And we are told that an experience of this nature wrought the most beneficial alteration upon the culprit's views of industry, producing in him a docile willingness of mind to "put hym selve to laboure lyke as a true man oweth to do."

With the exception of this form of persuasion, which possibly might not commend itself to modern notions, the working of the old Act appears to have been of a most humane and charitable nature. An invaluable insight into its minutest details as regards Finchingfield has been found in an ancient "Towne Booke" recently discovered, with other documents, in the parish church, and revealing a state of affairs creditable alike to the hearts and heads of all concerned, especially when one remembers the unlimited powers granted to those village magnates who took part in this form of local self-government. Ecclesiastical matters were then so interwoven with parochial business that statements of constables' and surveyors' expenses for repairs to the "Cage" and the "highweyes" may be seen in close connection with lists of church furniture and details of churchwardens' "layinges out." From the latter we learn that the price of the parchment bound "Booke" itself—purchased in 1605

—was 2s. ; the much abhorred “Surples,” containing “nyne elles of Holland” in its ample folds, with “Makinge and Washinge of the same” came to 14s. 6d. ; the “Houre Glasse” cost 10d., and the “alteringe” of its “yearne” (*i.e.*, iron) “worke,” 1s. 8d. “A cushinge for the Pulpitt” was obtained for 8s. 2d. and a “hinge” for the “Pulpitt doore” cost 4d., while upon a new “Churche Clocke” the large sum of £1 7s. was expended. This clock subsequently gave much trouble like unto the manner of Church clocks in all generations, for only two years after its “makinge” three items occur in the Churchwardens’ accounts for “mendinge” the same, and its “springe.”

The fourteenth-century “foont”—still happily in existence—was provided by “Goodman Brand” with a cover for 7s. 6d. ; 8d. extra being charged for “caringe the lid to Bardfield and for sending for the glass.” A “transcript of Chrisninges and burrialls” was occasionally conveyed to the Bishop’s Court in London, the conveyance costing 8d. Appeals called “breefes” were frequently sent on behalf of other “decayed” Churches or distressed individuals throughout the country, especially such as had sustained losses by shipwreck or fire. A “breefe collected for a burninge” is a common item.

The communion was celebrated four times a year ; “Fyve pintes of wyne,” at 6d. per pint, being the least quantity considered necessary on

each occasion, with a pennyworth of bread. In 1607 the churchwardens laid in a store of " Nynne Gallons one pinte and a halfe."

The money collected by rates was duly invested in what was called " Towne Stocke " ; the term implying that it had been lent at the interest of 10 per cent. to certain responsible parishioners, who yearly paid their due at the " Feast of the Annunciation of Our Lady Mary the Virgin." We read of William Kempe holding in his hands the sum of £30 1s. 10d. left in trust under the will of his relative George Kempe towards the " repretions of the Churche " and the " use of the poore," besides " such money of the towne stocke as amounteth to the sune of vi. o. o." (£6 0s. 0d.)

Details are also given in the old " Booke " respecting the Charities of Serjeant Bendlowes, who had bestowed a " messuage " upon the parish, besides " fourtie shillings a yeare out of a tenement in Sempford Magna " called Mud Hall, whereof XIII<sup>s</sup>. IIII<sup>d</sup>. (13s. 4d.) was devoted to the Church " reparations " ; namely, VI<sup>s</sup>. VIII<sup>d</sup>. (6s. 8d.) for " forty poore folks offeringe at Easter," and the remainder for similar purposes. Many of the " poore " or " blynd folk " received weekly relief from the Overseers, who also paid the rent for others, having authority under the existing Act to inspect their dwellings, and demand such repairs



as they deemed necessary from the owners, to whom a deputation from the "Meetinge" would be sent to "talk withall." The children of parents in distressed circumstances were also boarded out, or apprenticed at the public cost; a certain Pettytt of Saffron Walden receiving the sum of £4 10s. for "one Barley Morlyes children," while Will French took another for 40s.

A list of those receiving "ordinary collection" is given in 1613, and includes such varying personalities as "Long Brown," "the Boy Brown," "Blynd James," and "Mother Petchitt." Special offertories for "extraordinarie releefe" were ordered the same year to be held at "every quarter Communion" by the "Churchwardens and Overseers for the Tyme being . . . to beginge so soone as the sermon at morning prayer is ended . . . at the Church Chancell and Chapell doors," comprising in all six exits, so that none could escape making their "voluntary benevolence." Reference would be made in the Minister's discourse to the subject, he being instructed under an earlier Act to "make (according to such talent as God have given him) a Godlye and briefe exhortation to his Parishioners moving them . . . to remember the poore people, and the dutie of . . . relieving of them which bee their brethren in Christe . . . and nedeing their help." "Moneye" was also gathered for the same

purpose on the anniversary of the gunpowder plot.

Besides these collections, the local authorities had the power of enforcing the sale of corn in favourable seasons, and storing it up for the use of persons in "unfained miserie" during times of scarcity; those who had no corn to part with being ordered to pay a contribution at the rate of 1s. per bushel. This was apparently a sore point, and occasionally protests were made. In the "Midsomer metinge" of 1636, we read in the minutes that although this "composition rate" only amounted in all to 8s., yet "the towne doth not approve of it." The purchase of the corn was not necessarily confined to the parish. An account exists of a "Monthly Meetinge" held at Giles Walford's house in February 1680 at which Stephen Marshall was present, when it was agreed that "Goodman Chaplyn, goodman Walford, and goodman Choate shal go to Waldone to bye some corne for the poore."

All officers were annually newly appointed by the "Towne," it being a most unusual proceeding for one individual to retain the same post two years in succession. Besides the instalment of fresh Churchwardens, Constables, Overseers "of the poore, and Surveyors of the high-weyes," the "Vestrey" also elected such varying appointments as Constables, Sidesmen—called Questmen in 1631—and even occasionally "Alefounders,"



the duties of the latter being probably akin to those of our modern excisemen. All offices were held indiscriminately by the principal or most reliable inhabitants, William Kempe being a Surveyor at the time of his death.

Gyles Walford was evidently a worthy who inspired much confidence, his name continually occurring in the "Towne Booke" as occupying some position of trust. As Constable in 1640, he rebuilt the village "Cage" or "lock up," at a cost of £13 13s. 2d., a terror to evil doers still remembered by aged inhabitants, though its place by the side of the wooden footbridge across the village stream knows it no more. In the same year Gyles reported "laying out about 5 soul-dyers," the sum of £5 2s. 10d.

Another item that would be brought before this rural Council was the repair of bridges. A difference of opinion arose in 1642 respecting "the horsebridge and footbridge commonly called Petches' Bridges" that spanned the river—a small tributary of the Blackwater—as it flowed across a remote and picturesque lane about two miles from the village. These edifices were described as "wholly fallen downe," but a complication arose over the fact that "some witnesses . . . doe testifie that the Bridges have been repaired by Mr. Meade's ancestors, and others testifie that the officers of the parish have . . . done them." It was finally agreed, "mutu-

ally and friendly, that the said Horsbridge be made a Cartbridge, and the Footbridges likewise new made, and the charge to be borne the one halfe by the parish of Finchingfield, and the other halfe by Mr. Meade."

A "note of such things as belong to the Church" occurs in the record of an Easter Vestry soon after Marshall became Vicar. The list is curious, and throws light on what was considered essential for the proper performance of divine worship in the year 1631. It is "delivered" by the outgoing Churchwardens unto their successors in office, who are directed to find in due order :

" One silver bowle with a cover.

A Surplice.

One pewter Flagon.

One Communion Cloth of Holland, and one Napkin.

One Carpet.

One long Greene Cushion.

One great byble, 2 service books.

One great book of Mr. Jewell's work.

Two little boxes to gather money with.

2 hutches."

An ancient oak chest still preserved in Kempe's Chapel is most probably one of the two "hutches" referred to. But of the other treasures not a trace remains. The comfortable green cushions and the

April 11<sup>th</sup> 1642

Memorandv the day and year above written  
it is agreed betwixt the Gentlemen and other  
Inhabitants of this parish of Finchamfield  
whose names are here underwritten on the  
one part, and ~~Mr~~ John Meade Esquire another  
Gentleman Inhabitant on the other part, that  
whereas the horl bridge and foot bridges commonly  
called peckins Bridges are now wholly fallen  
downe, and some witnesses being examined  
doe testifie that the Bridges have bin re-  
paired by Mr. Meades ancestors, and others  
testifie that the officers of the parish have  
from time to time done them, it is therefore  
mutually and friendly agreed that the said  
horl bridge shall be made a Cart bridge, and  
the foot bridges likewise now made, and the  
charge to be borne the one halfe by the  
parish of Finchamfield and the other halfe  
by Mr. Meade, and soe to be maintained  
and kept in repaire for time to come betwixt  
the parish and Mr. Meade in equall pro-  
portions.

Robt Rempe  
Wm Denlows  
John Burners  
Stephens Marshalls  
Hugh Glover.

Martin Spurrors

Wm. Tom.  
James Chaplains Senr.

Jacob Ogden Jun.

John Guye

Frederick Livingston  
David Hoate

John Booth  
Edward Ogden

Michael Gormall  
Thomas Wyfield

John Lamand  
Giles Wallford  
John Allfunder  
Jehu Heato  
his X mark.

John Clark

John Meade

1736  
1642  
144



old world Flagon of pewter, with the ample surplice, whose "makinge" took "nine ells of Holland," have alike gone the way of all the earth, and met the inevitable fate that lies in store for treasures of a bygone past. The "greate booke" was doubtless the English version of Jewell's "Apology for the Church of England" originally published in Latin in 1562.

Until quite recent times, a seventeenth-century fellow to the old "Towne Booke" was known to exist, but now it is searched for in vain, and no account can be given of its disappearance. This is the more regrettable, because on its first page was written a quaint memorandum in Marshall's own handwriting, valuable as denoting the strict views of a puritan Divine on the subject of fasting, which was apparently so rigorously enforced that special clerical permission had to be obtained for exemption. This curious entry is dated March 17, 1632, and is as follows :

"Mem :—The day and year above written,—I Stephen Marshall, Vicar of Finchingfield, having eight days since licensed, so farre as in mee lyeth, Mrs. Dorothy Meade and Ann the wife of James Chaplain, and Susannah the wife of James Choate, to eat flesh in their knowne sickness ; and their sickness still abiding upon them, as is notoriously knowne, I doe therefore as is appointed by the laws, still allow the said Dorothy and Susannah



and Ann, so farre as in me lyeth, to eat flesh as is allowed by the statute, so long as their sickness shall continue and no longer.

"By mee, Stephen Marshall Vicar of Finchingfield.

"Witnesses of this to be done and allowed the day and yere above written.

"John Stock, and James Maysent, Churchwardens."

And so the rustic community and their worthy pastor pursued the even tenour of their way, nothing occurring of more importance in their little world than the business of a "Towne Meeting," and the settling of parochial accounts, with the variation of a journey now and again to the neighbouring markets to buy "Corn for the Poore." Probably the highest excitement would be reached when the constable caught an unwilling occupant for the "Cage" or the stocks; an even more desirable event if the rogue could be benefited by personal correction, and so become the means whereby the sum of 4d. might be honestly earned by the chief performer of the ceremony. Also keen interest would no doubt arise on such occasions as the "drowninge" of William Kempe's servants in the fish ponds, or the solemn pageant of some elaborate funeral when—according to the items in the "Towne Books"—£3 12s. 4d. would be considered a suit-

able sum to spend on "Cakes and Wine," and £4 8s. 8d. on gloves. For unto this day the rural taste of East Anglia ever prefers tragedy to comedy, and chiefly loves to dwell upon the last scene in the chequered drama of human life.

## CHAPTER II

“While we are wrangling here in the Darke, we are fast passing to that Lande where all Controversies will soon be forgotten, and the way thither is by Peaceable Holiness.”—*Richard Baxter.*

BUT while the parish life went on as usual, the gathering clouds of the national storm were drawing nearer, until their deep shadows began to cast themselves over the remote Essex village. During the early days of the struggle between Laud and the puritan clergy, Marshall either did not attach much importance to varying forms of worship, and regarded difference of ceremonial as non-essential, or else he judged it expedient to yield to authority. In Dr. Aylett's ecclesiastical inspection during 1631, his report of Finchingfield is that “Mr. Marshall, parson there, preacheth only on holy days, and is in all ways conformable.” But in 1633, when Laud again rigorously enforced conformity, his Vicar-General, Sir Nicholas Brent, denounced Marshall as a “dangerous person and exceeding cunning. No man doubteth but that he hath an inconformable heart, but externally he

observeth all." Brent himself was a timeserver, and subsequently turned a traitor to the Archbishop, giving evidence against him at his trial.

The first time that Stephen Marshall's name came under the public notice had occurred a year or two previously, when his signature appeared among the forty-nine "beneficed and conformable" clergy in a petition to Laud on behalf of Thomas Hooker, the learned and devout lecturer of Chelmsford, who, having been suspended by the Bishop, was then conducting a school at Little Baddow, assisted by John Eliot, afterwards known as the "Apostle to the Indians."

Samuel Collins, vicar of the neighbouring town of Braintree, and a man of wide conciliatory views, appears to have been the leading spirit in this appeal, writing also a private letter to Laud, warning him of the danger of persecuting so popular a preacher, and begging him to let Hooker "quietly depart," rather than arouse the "turbulent spirits, that . . . doe much disturbe our peace." The Reverend Samuel loves not the growing craving for religious changes; he protests "it's the . . . greatest griefe of my soull to see how full of whirligiggs the heads of the people begin to growe"; but foreseeing the coming storm, he most discreetly advises a course of non-resistance, and concludes by a petition that his letter may be shown to no one. "I dare

not say halfe of what I heare," he complains, "paper walls are so easily broken open."

It is needless to record that the headstrong prelate took no notice of all this sage advice, and ordered Hooker to appear before the Court of High Commission ; but the lecturer was too wise to obey the summons, and with the aid of the puritan Earl of Warwick he escaped into Holland, and from thence to New England. Here Eliot shortly after joined him, and in connection with Thomas Shepherd (another ejected Essex lecturer) founded the beginning of a small mission to the Indians, sending home an appeal for the recognition of their labours a few years later in the form of two tracts. These being published in 1647 with prefaces signed by Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy and others, resulted in a society being formed by Order of Parliament that eventually grew into the well-known Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

After the departure of Hooker, the religious discontent in Essex was at its height, many seeking a refuge from ecclesiastical despotism in the New World ; yet, as is ever the case in times of revolution, a large party of disorderly malcontents and fanatical extremists were associated with those of sincere piety. So far all went on smoothly in Finchingfield under the wise and powerful personality of Stephen Marshall ; but his less gifted neighbour, the vicar of Braintree, pitifully strug-



gled against the stream, vainly endeavouring to please all parties, and ending by getting under the serious displeasure of Laud for concession to the Nonconformists. This drew forth a quaintly worded wail of distress from the unfortunate man, who, after all his well-meaning attempts to "reduce a congregation into order that hath been disorderly this fifty years by moderate and slow proceedings," now found himself between the horns of a dilemma ; hated by his parishioners for going too far in his efforts to maintain church discipline, and reprimanded by the Bishop for not going far enough. It is hardly surprising to find that with all his protests of orthodoxy, he yet would fain add this one small petition to the Litany : "From this People, Good Lord deliver me !" He pleads for "removall from hence in convenient tyme," trusting that if Laud cannot assent to his request, he may "ere long be at rest with the Great Bishopp of Souls." But the storm blew over, and the Reverend Sam remained as Vicar of Braintree during all the vicissitudes of the rebellion, until he died at peace with all in the year 1657, after having—according to Matthew Newcomen's account in his funeral sermon—"advanced his poore towne . . . to a state and degree of eminency in Profession and outward Propriety !"

Far different was the destiny in store for his friend at Finchingfield, whose fame as a preacher

was already spreading over the country. The day was fast coming when the peaceful life of a village pastor must be exchanged for a foremost place in the great political and religious war about to overwhelm England. Time rolled onwards, bringing with it the eventful year of 1640. The fourth Parliament of Charles I. was summoned in the spring, and the voice of the preacher was to be heard in many an Essex pulpit, exhorting and persuading with all his powers of oratory on behalf of Lord Warwick and the puritan cause. But this ill-fated Parliament soon came to an untimely end, being suddenly dissolved by the King at the end of three weeks. It was not until November 3 that the famous Long Parliament began its existence, the reforming party from Essex being well represented ; the members including Robert, Lord Rich, eldest son of the Earl of Warwick, Sir Henry Mildmay, Sir Thomas Barrington, and Harbottle Grimston, the latter taking a prominent part in the debate on "grievances," and accusing Laud of high treason.

November 17 was set apart as a "solemn Fast Day," the House assembling for worship in St. Margaret's, Westminster, where Stephen Marshall and Dr. Burgess were appointed to conduct the service. This they did with so much eloquence and power, preaching and praying by turn for seven hours uninterruptedly, that Parliament voted its thanks and a present of silver plate

to each. Marshall was also given the appointment of lecturer of St. Margaret's, special preacher to the House of Commons—with a salary of £300 a year—and soon became one of the leading theological legislators of the Westminster Assembly.

During the next ten years, Finchingfield saw little, if anything, of its now famous vicar. His name occurs in the "Towne Booke" at the April meeting of 1642 when the "Inhabitants of the Parish met to consider the 'wholly fallen downe' condition of Petches' Bridge." After that period the rugged signature is seen no more until the year 1650. The inhabitants of the Essex village sent up a petition to Parliament in 1642 by Sir Robert Kempe, setting forth their "desire to retain Mr. Marshall their Pastor among them," but their wish was rejected. Stephen might continue to hold his country living, but his gifted tongue was needed elsewhere. A certain Mr. Letmale was appointed as a sort of curate-in-charge, but this individual—though bracketed with Marshall in 1646 as co-minister under the Presbyterian Classes system—apparently held no office in Finchingfield and probably never set foot in the place, the parochial work being carried on by Hugh Glover, who had resided in the village since 1635, and subsequently succeeded Stephen as vicar of the parish.

Marshall remained in London, where his influence rapidly became so great that Clarendon

confesses, "Certainly Laud never had such influence with the King as Marshall with the Parliament," and that, says Calamy, "carries with it a pretty strong figure." From the same loyalist source we are told that the preacher's voice was of such extraordinary volume and power that it could only be compared to the roar of a Geneva bull, which designation stuck to Marshall as a nick-name all his life, in company with "The Bellwether of the Presbyterian flock," "The Archflamen of the rebellious rout," and also "Damnation-a-pulpit-full," given him by a less refined adversary!

And as in bygone days the country parson "captivated the people" by his "facetiousness" and "odd Bywords," so also in Westminster Abbey's venerable pulpit the puritan divine continued occasionally to combine amusement with instruction for his sedate listeners. Dorothy Osborn tells us, in a private letter, how she attended a "morning exercise" at the Abbey on purpose to hear the noted preacher, who, she adds, "is so famed that I expected vast things from him, and seriously I listened at first with as much reverence as if he had been St. Paul!" But she has to confess, "I was near laughing when I should not. What do you think he told us? Why, that if there were no kings, no queens, no lords, no ladies, no gentlemen, or gentlewomen in the world, it would be no loss at all to the Almighty!"



But Marshall was not always humorous ; there was another side to his powers of oratory as described by Marsden in the following concise words: "In the pulpit he triumphed. By general consent he was the greatest preacher of his time. His manners, like his mind, were ardent, and when he began to speak he was swept along by a fervid eloquence that seemed to spurn control."

That he used his great abilities at this period chiefly as a means whereby to benefit the puritan party, and draw adherents to the service of the Parliament, there is little doubt. In that curious old sermon, "Curse ye Meroz"—preached over and over again to never-tiring audiences—we see a sample of the impassioned appeal on behalf of "The Cause," identical, in the preacher's eyes, with that of a holy war between eternal right and justice against all powers of darkness and iniquity. His hearers are exhorted to count nothing too precious to lay down in this sacred struggle, but to invest all—even their own selves—in "the Insurance Office of Heaven," with the sure and certain hope of receiving all back a hundred fold in this life, not losing a penny in that celestial bank, and in the world to come everlasting life.

Probably the following quaint description given by Thomas Fuller of another contemporary divine might apply with equal aptness to Marshall : "His sermons were not so plain but that the seriously learned might admire them, nor so learned but



that the plaine did understand them. . . . An excellent Surgeon was hee at joynting of a broken Soule." Yet "he would pronounce the word *damn* with such an emphases as left a doleful echo in his auditor's eares, . . . and in expounding the Commandments could make his Hearers' Heartes fall downe, and their Haires stande upright."

A far nobler aspect of Marshall's preaching was his sense of national righteousness and his fearless denunciation of moral wrong. Like Savonarola, in Florence, the voice of the militant puritan thundered in Westminster Abbey and from other pulpits, calling upon England to repent of her sins. The "Cause" could not prosper unless the Church was purged from all iniquity, and the purification of the Church must be wrought by the spotlessness of the individual life. "Let every house," he cried, "sweep the dirt from its own doorstep, and then the whole street will soon bee clean. For there bee those that weare the Lord's Livery, and doe the Devill's work all the day long."

At times the storm of eloquence would sink into a calm, and the wordy tempest pass into the still, small voice of human pathos dwelling upon the inexorable mysteries of the sorrow and suffering of the world. In the finest sermon that he ever preached—his masterpiece on the death of Pym—may be found many such touching passages as

the preacher, lifted awhile above all party feelings and political strife, described to the Abbey's crowded congregation the triumphant passing of the great patriot—his "heart filled with more joy than his tongue could utter"—unto his well-earned rest. The effect of this discourse was remarkable. Pym had always been revered as a statesman and orator, but Marshall's words left another impression on his audience, and the patriotic Englishman was lost sight of in the saint of God who had been taken away from the evil to come.

They are indeed our Pillar fires,  
Seen as we goe,  
They are that Citie's shining spires,  
We travel to.

But probably the height of Stephen Marshall's distinction was the leading part he played in Henry VII's Chapel and the Jerusalem Chamber as one of the most prominent members of the Westminster Assembly, and it is in allusion to his powerful influence over that theological Parliament that Dean Stanley has called him "The Primate of the Presbyterian Church." It would be tedious to enter fully here into this public phase of his life, or attempt to describe all the weary details of petty wranglings of those well-meaning divines, as they sought to re-model the English Church upon a new and complicated system. Their endless debates over such knotty points as the difference between a "Doctor" and a

"Pastor," and whether each parish required the services of both these exalted dignitaries ; the distinction between preaching and "expounding," and the desirability of a ministerial bow from the pulpit before the commencement of the weighty discourse, together with the unholy struggle of the Scottish party, with Baillie at their head, to suppress all toleration for other creeds, may be read by all who list in the pages of history.

Even at the slow and steady pace of the worthy men, matters did not always run smoothly. For example, during the proceedings of the sub-committee appointed to draw up the "Directorie" for Public Worship—and after an interminable discussion over the "conveniencie" of prefacing the lengthy prayer that preceded the yet more lengthy sermon—Baillie complains in one of his letters : "While we were sweetlie debaiting . . . in came Mr. Goodwin, who incontinently assayed to turn all upside downe." But he adds triumphantly, "That day, God opened my mouth somewhat to my own contentment." It was "necessare" however, to invite Mr. Goodwin to dinner, and spend an afternoon with him—also "very sweetlie"—before he could be induced to give up his pet heresy that "all prefacing was unlawful, and, that according to 1 Tim. ii. 1 in the first prayer we behoofed to pray for the King" instead of in the last at the end of preaching. Marshall's influence all throughout these years of religious

wrangling was thrown on the side of wider toleration, and broader views, to the intense disgust of Baillie, who records : " He is for a middle way of his own, and draws a faction in the Synod . . . God help us." On one occasion a prayer-meeting was held, and the powers of Heaven invoked to " abate the insolent cunning of Mr. Marshall."

So, week after week, and month after month, went by, and still saw the Assembly of England's greatest divines disputing over the thirty-three articles of the once famous Confession of Faith, and expending their undoubted abilities on the impossible task of reducing to stereotyped dogma such unfathomable mysteries as regeneration, predestination, and the last judgment.

In 1645 the Book of Common Prayer was suppressed by order of Parliament, and its use even in private houses forbidden, under the penalty of a year's imprisonment for the third offence, an Act described by Marsden as possessing "few parallels in the dreary records of intolerance." The "Directory for Public Worship" took its place. Marshall wrote the portion of it relating to preaching—a concise epitome in four pages of deep religious feeling, though, needless to say, it did not meet with the approbation of the rigid Scots. "Mr. Marshall's part anent preaching," says Baillie, "though he be the best preacher in England, yet we no ways like it."

Although episcopacy had been condemned with



the issue of the directory, yet it was not until two years later that the presbyterian system, with its four courts—parochial, classical, provincial, and national—became established by law. It took little hold on the religious mind of the nation, and a more independent form soon came into use in most districts, until the year 1660 swept both away. The great theological structure built up with such elaborate care had its foundation laid upon the quicksand of a shifting popularity. One factor towards its short-lived erection may be ascribed to the ever famous "Smectymnus" controversy, which also did much to bring Marshall's name prominently before the public, and to which some reference is due.

Early in the year 1640, Bishop Hall of Exeter published his "Episcopacie by Divine right," dedicating it to Charles I. It contained the usual kind of argument then in vogue, abounding in what were "animadversions" on the presbyterian order of Church government, now brought in at "this fagge end of the world." The Bishop waxed merry over the notion of each parish producing "an Ecclesiastical Consistory, consisting of one or more Pastors, a Doctor, Elders and Deacons," when perhaps there were not so many houses as the officers that were required. "What stuff," he says, "would these be? Perhaps a young, indiscreet, giddy Pastour, and for a Doctor, who, where, and what; John-a-Noakes, and John-a-



Styles, the Elders ; Smug-the-Smith a Deacon ; and who or what should these rule, but themselves and their own Plough-shares ? ”

This little book, printed “ in Paul’s Church Yard at the Pyed Bull near St. Austin’s Gate,” and followed within a few months by another tract on the same subject, called “ A Humble Remonstrance,” addressed to the High Court of Parliament, acted like a spark to a powder magazine upon the puritan world. Five eminent theologians rushed at once into the fray : Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen and William Spurstowe. All were East Anglian men, except the last, who was a friend of John Hampden, and rector of his parish. The initial letters of their names formed the pseudonym of their joint authorship, and their lengthy “ Answer ” to Bishop Hall was published as “ written by Smectymnus,” and printed at “ the sign of the Bible in Pope’s Head Alley.” The wording of the title-page prepares the reader for what is to follow in the 104 pages of this quaint old tract. In them he is invited to find

“ The original of {Liturgy  
                                  {Episcopacie} discussed

And Queries propounded concerning both.

The PARIETY of Bishops and Presbyters  
in Scripture demonstrated.

The occasion of their IMPARIETY in Antiquity discovered.

The DISPARITY of the Ancient and our  
Modern Bishops Manifested.  
The PRELATICAL Church Bounded."

That this production tended somewhat to overthrow the episcopal cause, there is little doubt, yet it would be hard work for a modern reader to wade through its strange jumble of Latin and Greek quotations from presumably every Father who had ever existed, intermixed with abstruse argument, and seasoned with that bitter invective so characteristic of the time. And the unworthy tone of personality in the tract itself is as gentle controversy when compared with the sweeping and almost hysterical abuse of Bishops in the postscript. Their practices—according to the writer—if recorded from the earliest times, would fill a volume like unto Ezekiel's roll, with mourning, lamentation, and woe; they were responsible for every injustice and iniquity from the days of Dunstan upwards, while their arrogance and pride were justly exemplified by the behaviour of that Archbishop of York in the reign of Henry, who, "striving to sit above Canterbury, squats him down on his lap, whence with many a cuffe was he throwne down." Even the memory of Anselm is not spared, and the dreary list of episcopalian misdeeds closes with the quotation of an old proverb—evidently used at that period over anything that

THE FISH STEWS



THE OLD POOR HOUSE



BRENT HALL

SPAINS HALL





was spoilt—"The Bishop's Foote hath beene in it!"

This appendix is not written in the same style as the rest of the tract, and is ascribed to the hand of John Milton, who subsequently took part in the controversy, publishing three vigorous pamphlets in defence of presbyterianism.

A pause followed in the wordy war; but only to give Bishop Hall sufficient time to collect all his forces of patristic lore, and produce the militant "Defence" of his former work against the "frivolous and false exceptions of Smectymnus." This was dedicated to "The King's Most Sacred Majestie," and is written in a more moderate strain as regards Hall's views on Church government, yet abounding in withering contempt for his opponents. He "little thought that so meeke and gallsesse a discourse" as his former one "could have irritated the least opposition. But now," he adds ruefully, "I find to my grieve that to move for peace is quarrell enough, and feel many fists about my eares." Nevertheless, he will attack his "Plural Adversary," whose real name, he mildly suggests, may be "Legion," like unto the demoniac of old. They "think to carry it by bulke" and condemning the multitude of his few words, have lashed out into so tedious an answer that he finds it hard to be patient with the endless battery of "paper pellets" from these "techie men."



The good Bishop then proceeds to point out supposed errors with quiet sarcasm, as if correcting a schoolboy's essay; remarking "My Masters, truly it is an ill sign to stumble, on the threshold," and their most cherished "allegation of Testimonie" is dismissed with a curt "Ye-Mis-English it. See how ye shuffle!" An incorrect reading from a certain Fibricianus is brought to their notice, with, "By the way, Brethren, give me leave to pull you by the sleeve, and tell you of two or three foule Scapes that ye have made, to try whether you can blush." They have talked of "sole ordination"; the Bishop will generously present them with that pair of soles for their next shoes! He implies that their preference for the presbyterian system is merely because of its passing popularity, as compared to the older form now under clouds of adversity, and adds, "the old word is . . . farewell a friend in a corner. . . . Like ill-bred sonnes, ye spit in the face of your Mother. For your undutiful carriage towards her, take heed of the Ravens of the Valley." The ideal of Hall, who was by no means a disciple of the extreme or Laudian school, appears to have been a fixed liturgy in conjunction with liberty of "conceived" or extemporaneous prayer. "The Deske is no hindrance to the Pulpit . . . the two are good friends, and may goe hand in hand together." Prejudices are often mere ignorant stumblings

against terms used, rather than objections to the ideas they represent, hence the "error of every addle-head" ; the words "sticking in the throat, or in the teeth."

An interesting allusion is made to Codex Alexandrinus, presented in 1628 to Charles I by the Patriarch of Constantinople, and now one of the priceless treasures of the British Museum. "Mine own eyes have seene it," says the old scholar, with loving reverence—as if recording a glimpse into the very life of the sacred past, "that noble manuscript, written by the hand of Tecla, 1300 yeares ago." He also mentions an ancient copy of the "Samaratine Chronicle," then in the hands of the learned Archbishop Ussher, in which reference is made to an old Judaic service-book lost in the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, and containing an exact account of the Israelites' ritual and songs, together with "an historicall enoration of the yeares of their generations." From these venerable records, he thinks the ingenious reader "will find authority enought to outpace an upstart conceite of some giddie heads" ; yet he goes on ruefully to remark, "What shall a man doe with such sullen and crabbed pieces as these ?"

He concludes by a rigorous protest against the personal imputations cast upon Bishops, pointing out colleges, hospitals, and churches as proofs of their "diligence in preaching, and holinesse in

living," and the scurrilous proverb about the Bishop's foot is scorned, as only fit for "some Ribald man upon an Ale-bench." "Brethren, while you desire to seem Godly, learne to be lesse Malicious. The fault is in your eies, not in your object. Wipe them, and look better . . . see good, as well as evill." Smectymnus is finally dismissed with the following devout, if somewhat satirical prayer :

In the meantime I beseech the God of  
Heaven to humble you in the sight and  
sense of your owne grievous un-  
charitableness, and to put (at  
last) into your hearts and  
tongues the Counsels  
of Peace. Amen.

Needless to say, Smectymnus soon produced another controversial pamphlet before the stormy year of 1641 had run its course. This time the excellent divines commence with a high note of virtuous and innocent indignation. Their tone is that of martyrs suffering for the truth, and being so "scorned and reviled," they think it well—"by waye of preface"—to lay before the "good reader" a complete list of all the "bitter invectives, false aspersions, hyperbolical confidences, and such like extravagancies," making twenty-six lines in all of every epithet hurled at their devoted heads by that wicked Bishop, who had borne "false witnesse" against the brethren, mis-

interpreting Origen, and "falsely citing Jerome." Their distress is pitiful but hardly dignified, and unconsciously carries out Hall's description of them as "techie" and crabbed, especially when dealing with the doubts cast upon their patristic learning, which they indignantly repudiate. Has the memory of the saintly Fibricianus been wronged by their lack of classical knowledge, and do they need to blush over their elegant rendering of his weighty words? "Nay," cry the offended worthies, "keep your blushes to make Liveries for yourself and your friends!" Then changing the attitude of ill-used martyrs for that of militant theologians, once more they charge upon the foe, bringing up again all their old forces of interminable appeals to, and quotations from Tertullian, Ignatius, and all the Fathers, wrangling over the translations, and even rejecting with scorn the great Codex Alexandrinus.

At last the storm wears itself out; Tertullian and Justin Martyr, Ignatius and Tecla quit the scene of combat, and Bishop Hall is finally dismissed with the parting words—so unconsciously prophetic of the whole conflict—"Here is much Cry, and little Wool!" For none would now care to wade through the tedious wordiness of the once famous Smectymnus debate, and while the simple pages of the "Pilgrim's Progress" live on in the affections of



devout souls amid all changes and chances of succeeding generations, the records of the fiery controversy that once shook the foundations of the English church, and over which so much scholastic lore was expended and so many tempers upset, lies forgotten and uncared for on the shelves of ancient libraries, amid age-worn and mouldering companions.

It is refreshing to turn to the human and better side of Stephen Marshall, and to find him, during the ensuing year, performing a kindly office on behalf of an old royalist friend. This was the much persecuted Edward Symons, rector of Rayne, a small village about nine miles from Finchamfield, whose inhabitants appear to have been as difficult to please as their near neighbours of Braintree, and are described by Kidder, who held the living a few years later, as "censorious, and factious to the greatest degree."

Symons's preaching—described by Fuller as "Plain, Piercing, and Profitable"—gave serious offence to his flock, and his direct denouncement of their favourite vices, especially those of "Lying and Slandering, Pride and Malice," was bitterly resented. His enemies accused him of puritanism, and on one occasion haled him before a Justice of the Peace for omitting the sign of the cross in baptism, and for not wearing the "surples"; while, at another time, the same individuals attacked him as a malignant, accused him



of preaching against the Parliament, and obtained the sequestration of his living from the "Committee for Scandalous Ministers." Not content with these measures, his foes planned an attempt upon his life, one hundred armed men from Colchester and Coggeshall lying in wait with intent to murder him, but the plot was frustrated. His family homeless, and his life in constant danger, Symons fled from place to place, seeking a temporary refuge, and ultimately ending his troubled life in London in 1649.

He was saved, however, from imprisonment by the "Testimony and Friendship" of Marshall, who stood bail for him. At one time, says Fuller, "Pens were brandished between the two men," but ere death, the great reconciler, came, "all was fair between them," and Symons, visiting Stephen "lying in his bed at Westminster"—the correct place at that period for receiving callers—told him: "Had I taken you for a Wild Beast, I should not have roused you in your Den."

Here it may be of interest to go back for a short time to the rural neighbourhood of Stephen Marshall, and see how the mighty struggle that was convulsing the nation affected his clerical brethren and the quiet country-side.

At the period when Edward Symons was driven homeless and penniless out of Rayne, the work of the "Scandalous Ministers" Committee was being carried on vigorously in many an Essex

village. Searching inquiries were instituted concerning the personal characters, ministerial capacities, and political opinions of the incumbents, and any found "scandalous in their lives," or "ill-affected to the Parliament" were promptly ejected from their livings. In this drastic manner some undesirable men were doubtless well got rid of; but the evidence against them, which was taken willingly from any parishioner, whether he owed the parson a grudge or not, was by no means reliable. A few examples may be given of these clerical delinquents.

The Rev. John Jegon, vicar of Little Hedingham, some five or six miles from Finchingfield, had a long and terrible list of sins to answer for before the Committee's Court at Halstead. Among other enormities he had not only "inveighed against godly Ministers"—naming Marshall—and preached a sadly heretical sermon on Judas—whom he had described as "going to his own place and not to hell"—but worst of all, he had allowed his wife and servants to "bag hops" on the Sabbath day, yea, even once conducting an afternoon service in the church while "the hops were a-bagging."

The benefice of Thorpe-le-Soken was taken away from Thomas Darnell mainly on the same grounds, only instead of gathering hops, he had profaned the Lord's day by "making Cleane his Cowhouse . . . and other like servile works." But

the indictment ends by saying "He hath expressed great malignancy against the Parliament," which was probably the root of the matter.

The remote village of Great Totham, situated in a wild moorland district not far from the coast, had a strange being for its pastor in Ambrose Westrop. "He doth commonly prophane the ordinance of preaching," runs the accusation, "by mentioning in the pulpit matters to stir up his people to laughter . . . and being angry with one whose name was Kent he said thus in the pulpit, *They say the Devill is in Harwich, but I am sure he is in Kent.*" His own brother-in-law was reminded from the same vantage-ground of his backwardness in paying tithe, with "You, Brother Blockhead, will pay no tithe bushes neither." This curious divine was equally eccentric in his manner of courtship, for we read that "being a suitor to Mistress Ellen Pratt, a Widow, he did write upon a piece of paper these words, '*Bonny Nell, I love thee well,*' and did pin it upon his cloake, and wear it up and downe a Market Towne." The wise lady refused him, whereupon, "he did for five or six weekes after utter nothing or little else in the Pulpit, but invectives against women." In course of time, he consoled himself, and wooed another matron, but again he was doomed to disappointment, for the good woman, after receiving a polite invitation to dine with him, failed to put in an appearance, whereupon "he roade to her

House desiring to speake with her, and she coming to the Doore, he pulled off her Heade Geare and roade away with it."

Dr. Walker, whose book on the "Sufferings of the Clergy" shows us many a maligned cleric in a new and better aspect, thinks that the Rev. Anthony was more to be pitied than blamed, and says that he was by nature a woman-hater; besides being a "Talkative, Maggoty Person" with a "Warm, not to say Unsettled, Braine."

Anyhow the poor crazy parson was turned out and left homeless in that desolate country, amid the heather and the gorse. Did any of the dames relent toward him, and offer him a shelter in adversity? We know not. Like many a better man, Anthony Westrop passes into mystery.

Five miles from Marshall's home, and situated upon one of the two highways to Braintree, stands the little village of Great Saling, whose vicar in those days was John Locke. An inordinate love of strong drink was his downfall, and matters reached their climax in a sad scene at "Braintree Faire," when the Rev. John was "so drunk that he could not walk upright, and one good wife, Bigbone, led him away." Also upon another occasion, it being market day at the aforesaid place, he was "not able to go home alone," but a passing Samaritan "was fayne to leade him, yet could not keep him upp . . . and coming out at the towne's end, he called at the George for more



Beere;" the escapade ending by a grievous fall amid bushes and brambles, whereby he "sorely rent his coate."

John Crosse, the vicar of Gosfield, a beautifully wooded village near Halsted, not only "suffered prophaning sports on the Lord's day," and had the Communion Table "rayled in and set altar wise," but was so filled with malice against "Godly Minesters" that when one of them preached in his Church he manifested his disapproval of sound doctrine by pulling "the Pulpit Doore open twice . . . so that the Minister was in danger to fall downe and spoil himself."

Another Essex minister—Daniel Falconer, of Aldham—lost his living upon accusations of drunkenness and poaching. He had drunke "at Colchester more than was fitt, and forgot himself so far at Mr. Whitgift's Child's baptizing" that he ran his head against a wall, and was seriously indisposed. Also he had "fished other men's ponds with netts, and set grains to catch hares," besides bestowing "much of his tyme about worldly employments, as dressing corne, pitching carts, and that on Satterday at night, whereas it were better he were in his Studdy."

In the towns the feeling against the older fashioned clergy ran high, and bitter animosity was shown by the people to any, however blameless their lives, who still read the Book of Common Prayer, or adhered to the cause of the King. At



Colchester the venerable old vicar of St. Mary Magdalene, Gabriel Honifold, was nearly murdered in the street by a furious mob, and only escaped with his life by seeking refuge in the common gaol, while his foes discussed the most desirable methods wherewith to "finish him off."

The Chelmsford townsmen were even more antagonistic, and Dr. Michaelson, the vicar of St. Mary's, must have had an unpleasantly warm time, according to Walker's account. He tells us that the trouble was begun by "the Godly Reformers, who did in greate measure deface the beautiful Church," while "the mob in a riotous manner with long Poles and Stones beat downe the Faire Windowe at the east end." Whereupon Dr. Michaelson thought it his duty the next Sunday to "inveigh against popular and tumultuous reformations. This so incensed the . . . Factionous People that they threatened to ruin him." A gun was fired into his room, but he happened to be out. Then "the Rabble got together," and after divine service took the unfortunate parson by the throat, calling him "Baal's Priest," while the soldiers raided his house. The prayer book continuing to be used in the church the populace walked in "with their Hats on, makinge a noise to drowne the Curate's voice, calling to him to *Come out of his calve's coope, and make an end of his Pottage,*" and finally ending by seizing the offending "Booke" and tearing it into pieces.

Soon after this a funeral took place in Chelmsford church, and the vicar was committing the body of some unknown person to its last rest in the dark vaults beneath with the beautiful words of sure and certain hope from the Church of England's burial service. It became known in the town that the hated book was being used, and into the sacred building rushed the mob, so blind with passion that only one idea possessed them, which was to fling the unhappy vicar into the open grave beneath the church floor and bury him alive. "And," says Walker, "had he not been rescued they would have succeeded." But matters reached their worst when news was brought of the abolition of episcopacy by order of Parliament. Bonfires were kindled in the streets, "most of the fuel being taken from the Doctor's woode yarde." Then in the mad excitement of the scene the horrible idea seized the soldiers and the populace to go again to his home, not this time for the minister's wood, but "for his Person, to carry him to the fire, there to throwe him Head-long into the midst of it." From this terrible fate he was saved by the military commandant, and shortly after the poor man fled the town, only returning sometimes by stealth at night to visit his wife and children, until he was captured and cast into prison. At the Restoration he was re-possest of his living, and ended his troubled life unmolested.

## CHAPTER III

"Bitterness comes very near to Enmity, and that is Beelzebub ; because the Perfection of Wickedness.

"It is a great Presumption to send our Passions upon God's errands."—*William Penn.*

RETURNING to Stephen Marshall, we find him next among those notable puritan preachers who gave their ministrations to the Parliamentary forces during the earlier stages of the lamentable civil war, following the army on its march to Nottingham, and back through Northamptonshire in pursuit of royalist troops. Marshall was appointed Chaplain to the Earl of Essex in connection with Dr. Burgess, and his ready eloquence had a magnetic effect upon the soldiers. A subaltern among them, Nehemiah Wharton by name, relates in a letter the impression made by the preaching of "that worthy Champion of Christ," who, he says, "hath subdued and satisfied more malignant spirits amongst us than a thousand armed men could have done." And on the night before the battle of Edgehill we are told that he "went from tent to tent inspiring the men by his fervent

exhortation and more fervent prayers." Unfortunately the presbyterian chaplains did not long continue their connection with the forces. They were too moderate and conciliatory for the extremists, and in consequence of friction they "silently withdrew." "The army lost its best advisors," says Marsden, "and, left to itself, soon broke out into the wildest excesses of fanaticism."

In the autumn of 1643 the Parliament despatched Commissioners to Edinburgh to treat with the Scots, and arrange the terms upon which their assistance could be obtained. Four members from the House of Lords were selected, with four from the House of Commons; while Stephen Marshall and his son-in-law Philip Nye represented the Westminster Assembly; Marshall preparing the State papers for presentation, with the aid of Sir Henry Vane. The negotiations ended, he remained behind for a short time, preaching with "greate contentment" in the Tron Church. This delay prevented him from being present at that strange and solemn ceremony in St. Margaret's Church on September 23, when the League and Covenant was read out from the pulpit by Nye; after which the crowded congregation of statesmen and divines arose, and each man with his right hand uplifted unto Heaven, swore by the name of the Almighty to maintain the same, even unto death.

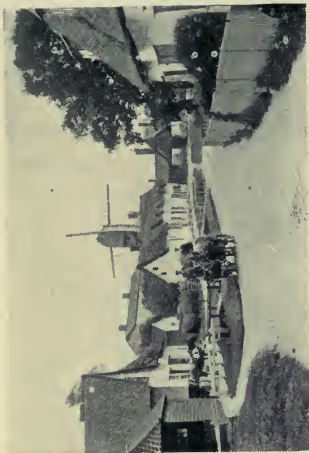


Upon Marshall's return, he was elected chairman of the sub-committee of five Assembly members, who—with the northern delegates—were to prepare the Directory. But as we have seen, his theology was never severe enough to meet with the approbation of the rigid Scotch calvinists, and the appointment does not appear to have been well pleasing unto them. His detractors even related with malicious delight that although his eloquence might have held spellbound his Edinburgh audience, yet, somewhat strangely, during his visit to that city, "in a Storme it rained rotten Egges upon his Heade."

In fact his popularity and eminent position so excited the envious wrath of his foes, that when overtaken with sickness soon after his return from Scotland, a "Letter of Spiritual Advice" was sent him anonymously, admonishing him to regard this trial as a consequent judgment for his many misdeeds, adding that it would be only "according unto his Mercy" if the Lord "tooke such a Fire-brand out of the World." Not content with this spiteful letter, they laboriously propagated a report—sending it from "Court to City, from City to County and from County to Foreign Partes"—that the great preacher was "distracted," and in a delirium of remorse for adhering to the Parliament was constantly declaring himself to be in a state of damnation; while finally his death was declared to have occurred, and the last scene was



DUCK END



WEATHERSFIELD CHURCH



LEES PRIORY



SHALFORD CHURCH



described as having taken place amid cries of horror and despair.

When the news of his premature decease reached Stephen, that worthy man was peacefully recruiting his health, and recovering from the temporary disablement of his remarkable voice at Lees Priory, the beautiful Essex seat of the Earl of Warwick.

In the picturesque valley of the little river Ter, some twelve miles south of Finchingfield, may still be seen the dilapidated remains of the once stately Tudor mansion, erected upon the site of an Augustinian monastery by Richard Lord Rich, the unscrupulous Chancellor of Henry VIII. In the seventeenth century the noble pile—with its fine gatehouses and courtyards, its battlements, and fluted terra-cotta chimneys—was in the fulness of its renown for loveliness and splendour. Surrounded by "princely gardens," and vast extents of deeply wooded park; the combined glories of art and nature reflected in a glittering expanse of water, once the old "fish stews" of the monks, and now cattle pastures, it is little wonder that the good chaplain Anthony Walker called it a "Worldly Paradise", or that Robert Boyle spoke of it as "Delicious Leez."

But doubtless the spot rendered most sacred to all who love fair memories of bygone days is the tangled shrubbery called then—as now—the "Wilderness"; the pious retreat in after days

of Mary Rich, the Earl's young daughter-in-law, subsequently known as the saintly Countess of Warwick. At the time of Marshall's visit she was but a girl-bride of seventeen summers, already capable of serious thought, although the further awakening of her spiritual nature did not occur until a few years later, when, under the influence of her "worthy friend Dr. Walker," combined with a "sanctified affliction," she turned from the "tinsell glories of this deluding world" to a life of unselfish piety and mystic meditation; ever living—as she expressed it—"with dying thoughts," that she might "die with living hopes."

There is no record to show what impression, if any, was made upon her by Stephen Marshall; his name is not mentioned among the lists of other noted ministers in the district, who appear to have been constant guests at Lees Priory. Men of high spirituality were ever welcome in that devout household, whether their views were strictly puritan or not. Dr. Gauden, for instance, the good Dean of Bocking—a "comely person of vaste partes"—was often invited to dispense edifying discourse from the pulpit, although he remained a consistent loyalist throughout the whole revolution, and is supposed to have been the author of the famous "Eikon Basilike," assisted by Edward Symons. In fact, time would fail to tell of all the divines to whom Lees opened

its ever-hospitable doors, who often showed their gratitude by producing little books of pious admonition, and presenting them to Mary Rich. They were of a solemn, if not gloomy style ; the excellent authors having evidently never learnt to "serve God and be cheerful."

Abraham Cayly's "Glimpses into Eternity" was a book much beloved by the good Countess, yet its contents are described in the title-page as "Profitable to be reade in Families, and at Funeralls." This kind of religious food for the adult soul is hardly to be wondered at, when one remembers that among the most esteemed literature for juveniles in the seventeenth century—and even later—was good James Janaway's "Tokens for Children, or the Account of the Holy Lives and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children." The modern reader who may chance upon this quaint book is filled with a wholesome pity for the theological struggles of the poor little creatures, yet Janaway—as we are told in Wood's "Athenæ"—was "much admired for a Forward and Precious Young Man, especially by those of the Female Sex."

But we must return to Marshall in his convalescent condition at the Lees Priory. Upon receiving the news of the unpleasant rumours set on foot by his adversaries, he wrote one of his quaintly worded letters to "A friende in the City" in vindication of his spiritual and mental



sanity, and had it published at the "Sunne, in Paul's Church Yard."

The illness of which so much was made seems to have been no more than a severe cold, which he describes as a "deepe distillation of my Heade upon my Lungs," and explains his seclusion as follows: "My learned, loving, and careful Physician, finding that the too importunate visits of many loving friends, occasioned too much speche, and thereby too much expense of spirits, advised me to remove to the house of my noble Lord of Warwick when I should have more Aire, and less Company." "Strange reports," he adds, "pursue me even into the Countrey; it is a Lying Spirit that God hath permitted to haunt me for my triall." Then follows a forcible denial of "any distemper in the heade," or cause of regret for the active public part he had played—indeed, he takes the opportunity of "giving ground and warrant" for his political position, and discussing at length, with rugged eloquence, the "lawfullnesse of the Parliament in taking up defensive Armes." The letter concludes with a powerful description of the horrors of civil war—that "Cruellest of all Warres"—which, though justifiable in the writer's eyes as a struggle for civil and religious liberty, he yet deplores as a miserable necessity, while the powers of "Romish Countries" remain unshaken. Surely the "levelling to the Earth of the proud turrets of Babylon," and the rescuing of Ireland

"out of her bloody pawes," would be a fitter object for the fury of the cannon "than English Townes, Homes, and Bodies."

Shortly after issuing this little tract, with health restored and powers renewed Stephen Marshall returned to his post in London, and we hear of him next in connection with the tragic death of Archbishop Laud. The old adversary of so many Essex puritans was now in the power of his enraged enemies, and a close prisoner in the Tower. But in his hour of adversity, subjected to privations and indignities, his books denied him, and even his collection of prayers carried off by Prynne, a gentler spirit took possession of the aged prelate, as he calmly awaited his inevitable doom.

"I willingly leave the world," he said, "being weary at the very heart of the enmities of it, of my own sins . . . and of the grievous distractions of the Church of Christ."

On January 4, 1645, the ordinance for his execution was passed, and the sentence was directed to be carried out on January 8. Stephen Marshall, with another noted divine, was selected by Parliament to wait upon him during the interval, and be present upon the scaffold. It was a strange and terrible sight that met the preacher's gaze that winter's morning on Tower Hill. Far as the eye could reach surged the vast crowd, eager to see the end of the unpopular

Archbishop. Every window was full of faces, while the whole extent was one sea of human heads, swaying and struggling in their efforts to get nearer to the scaffold. They pressed around it ; they climbed the posts, and hung suspended by the enclosing rails ; even crowding up the steps, and forcing their way on to the ghastly edifice itself.

"I did think," said Laud, "that I might have had room to die in," and asked that those under the scaffold might be removed so that his blood might not fall on their heads. Some amount of order being at last restored, the motley crowd listened in respectful silence as the old man delivered his last sermon, taking his text from Heb. xii. 2. He spoke with peaceful composure, although, as he told the "Good People," it was a "very uncomfortable time to preach in," and they must pardon his "Olde Memory" that necessitated the making use of his papers. He had come to the end of his race ; he was going apace to the Red Sea of Death, with his feet on the very brink, to the Land of Promise. For him, too, had the Lord's Passover been given ; "a Lambe it was, to bee eaten with soure Herbes." . . . "I shall obey," he said, with simple pathos, "and labour to digeste the soure Herbes . . . as well as the Lambe. And I shall remember that it is the Lord's Passover."

At the conclusion of the sermon Sir John Clot-

worthy, the fanatical member for Maldon, in Essex, worried the last moments that remained to Laud with propounding impertinent queries concerning his spiritual condition, and demanded to be informed what was the most comfortable saying that a dying man should have in his mouth." But death's red sea had drawn too near for earth's littleness to be of any moment now, and Laud only replied, "*Cupio dissoli, et esse cum Christo.*" Then, kneeling, he said : "Lord, I am coming to Thee as fast as I can. . . . I know I must passe through the Shadow of Death . . . but it is but '*Umbra Mortis,*' a meere Shadow." After which he commended his soul to the Lord, and the curtain fell on the last scene of his many-sided life. The huge crowd stayed a short time, gazing upon the pallid features of the dead as the executioner held his head aloft for their inspection, and then dispersed.

Marshall appears to have been a silent spectator of the awful scene. No word from him had pestered the dying prelate—he had not added to the dish of "*soure Herbes.*" Of the effect left upon him it is easy to guess from the subsequent horror with which he regarded the execution of the King.

The Uxbridge Conference followed closely upon the death of Laud, one of those well-meant but fruitless efforts to reconcile the differences of the contending parties. The theological department



was represented by three of the most able episcopals, on the one hand, and three equally noted presbyterians on the other, Marshall being one of the latter, in co-operation with Henderson and Vines. The King and his commissioners resided on one side of the street and the parliamentary delegates on the other. Daily prayers in the parish church were said before the royalists, while the walls of a large room at the village inn echoed to the stentorian voice of Marshall, uplifted in prayer and exhortation. The two opposing elements met in friendly intercourse, and possibly some mutual ground of compromise might have been arrived at but for a violent and intolerant sermon preached by Love, stirring up all bitterest feeling and producing so much religious friction that at the end of three weeks the unfortunate Conference broke up and the miserable war was resumed.

During the same year Marshall was again sent to Scotland with a letter from the Westminster Assembly. His day of power was now at its meridian, and his influence with the Parliament is aptly described in the quaint words of Fuller ; " He was their Trumpet by whom they sounded their solemn Fasts, preaching more publick Sermons in that occasion, than foure of his Function. In their Sickness, he was their Confessor ; in their Assembly, their Councillor ; in their Treaties, their Chaplain ; in their Disputations, their Champion."



Then with sarcastic allusion to Marshall's lenient views on ceremonial differences, the old royalist adds, "He was of so supple a soul that he brake not a joint, yea sprained not a sinew, in all the alteration of times."

However this may be, there seems little doubt that at this period of his life he conscientiously did his utmost to establish the presbyterian system, on a modified plan, in England. He doubtless instigated the appeal from one hundred and twenty-seven Essex ministers in May 1647, on behalf of the directory and confession of faith, and in the following January his efforts were rewarded by the settling of the presbyterian church government through the country. Finchingfield was placed in the tenth or Hinckford Classis with four elders, including his old friends, Sir Robert Kempe and John Meade. The fictitious Letmale was appointed co-minister, but the parochial work continued to be carried on by Hugh Glover, and apparently little alteration took place. The system was never popular, except in London and Lancashire, and the rural village, with an absentee vicar, was already feeling the influence of Independency.

About this time we find Marshall, as co-patron in connection with the Earl of Warwick, Edmund Calamy, and three others, presenting the neighbouring living of Felsted to Nathaniel Ranew. This "judicious Divine" had been a member of Stephen's old College, Emmanuel, and was sub-

sequently one of those upon whom the devout Countess of Warwick extended her kindly generosity, allowing him "£20 a year during life" after his ejection from his excellent living in 1662. The good minister, like many others, returned thanks to his fair benefactress by publishing a volume of three hundred and eighty-two pages for her special edification, entitled "Solitude improved by Divine Meditation." Felsted was a parish much connected with the puritan cause, especially as regards its Grammar School, where four of Oliver Cromwell's sons were educated under Martin Holbeach, Robert—the most promising of them all—ending his short life there.

Under the new religious mode of procedure, ordination was administered by a body of ministers and lay elders from adjoining parishes, and by virtue of this regulation Stephen Marshall assisted in the function of laying hands upon the good physician who afterwards paid so noble a tribute to his memory, and of installing him in the living of Shalford—a scattered and secluded village adjoining Weathersfield. Here Giles Firmin passed his peaceful days until his ejection, living a life that approached very nearly to that of Herbert's "Country Parson." Far from the madding crowd, he remained in his quiet home, corresponding with Baxter, tending his rustic flock in mind and body, writing quaintly beautiful treatises, and engaging in scholarly and

strangely courteous controversies with leading divines of the neighbourhood. The happiness of his domestic life is brought out in many human touches in the pages of a piously humorous little book called "The Real Christian." His sympathy is great for the gloomy religionist oppressed with dark thoughts ; he thinks the cause may oftentimes be "an unequal Yoke-fellow, with unhandsome Carriage." Unbounded is his compassion for those of either sex fated to spend their lives with partners whom the "house will not hold," or else "the Dumb Devils seize them." "Great Mercy surely must they have received of the Lord who can thus love such unlovely Objects."

Calamy calls him "A Man of Peace, not rigid or morose, but of Greate Moderation. He went about doing good, and therein was his Chief Delight." Such was the gentle friend and biographer of Marshall, only regrettably fierce when his guileless pen attacked that excellent community of Christian mystics who, under the name of the Society of Friends, were daily increasing in numbers and wisdom throughout Essex. But the good Giles only saw "A Discovery of the Prince of Darkness . . . powerfully working in the Deluded People called Quakers." Yet if the Friends had never encountered any bitterer foe than Firmin, one of the blackest pages in the records of religious hate need never have been written, and it would certainly have been well for

the peace of other parishes if all preferments during this period had been as judicious and acceptable to the people as that of the kindly physician to Shalford. For the power given to the Westminster Assembly of vetoing the appointment of a minister to any living by not allowing him to pass their searching examination occasionally raised bitter resentment among the parishioners if their wishes and opinions happened to clash with those of the theological magnates in London.

This was sadly the case in Thaxted—a quaint little town in Marshall's neighbourhood, now hardly more than a village, but famed for the possession of one of the largest, and probably the most beautiful of Essex churches. Built principally in the reign of Edward IV—its probable founder—and graceful with all the delicate tracery peculiar to that period, its lofty and finely pointed spire ever tapering towards a region beyond earth's little bickerings—the grand old building stands at the top of the winding street, with an ancient Moot Hall at its base, looking down upon modern life much as it did upon puritan England one turbulent Sunday in 1647. For on that August Sabbath it must be confessed that the religion of the good people of Thaxted was militant and aggressive rather than devotional, and the reason was on this wise.

Some time previously the committee for "Scandalous Ministers" had sequestered the



living from a certain Mr. Leader, appointing to officiate in his stead a "Godly learned Minister," Mr. Male by name. A year after his ejection Mr. Leader passed away. Now it would appear that in case of a parochial vacancy caused by death or resignation, the patron might claim the right of presentation, and refuse to accept the nominee of the committee, who in this instance found themselves crossing swords with a determined royalist dame, possessing a powerful personality and sincere religious horror of all puritan innovations.

This was the dowager Lady Maynard, of Easton Lodge, and the widow of William, Lord Maynard—a man noted for his uncompromising fidelity to the cause of the King. No middle course of reconciliation with the growing discontent was possible to him, and even his epitaph suggests that his end was hastened—if not caused—by weary disgust at the disquietude of the age; recording that after being with "conscience unblamable" . . . a "Defender of the peace, the laws, and the Catholic faith," . . . and seeing that "the rage of fanaticism daily increased, . . . he bade farewell to a restless, rebellious, ungrateful . . . and unworthy Country, . . . which he exchanged for a Better, namely a Heavenly, on the 10th of Dec. 1640."

And "Hannah, his very Honorable Wife," ruled and reigned in his stead.



Upon the death of Leader the committee urged the patroness to give the living of Thaxted to Male, but met with a flat refusal from that stately lady, who nominated instead a certain Edward Croxon, in defiance of their wishes and those of the "well affected parishioners." Therefore these last aggrieved persons brought all manner of accusations against their intended vicar, calling him "a soul-starving Pastor," who said they, "the whole county could not parallel . . . for swearing, cursing, drunkenesse," and other enormities. Finally they arraigned him before the "Scandalous Ministers Committee," and "prosecuted the same untill the saide Committee . . . sequestered the saide Living from Mr. Croxon." Whereupon Lady Maynard asserted her claim to make another nomination. and obtained it from the committee, upon the understanding that she would exercise her right within two months. The "well affected" sent a protest against "giving the lady power" again, after her presenting two unworthy ministers whose prosecution had cost at least a hundred pounds. But all in vain ; for whether by charm of personality or masterful power of will, the royalist lady got her own way with the puritan commissioners, and selected a Mr. Hall to be vicar of the parish. This choice was a very popular one with some of the Thaxted people, although one is sorry to confess that the

old record speaks of these admirers as "disaffected."

Only one difficulty remained ; the new vicar had to pass the Assembly's examination, and give satisfaction to that solemn tribunal of the soundness of his doctrine and the sobriety of his life. Now unfortunately for the poor man's prospects, his theological judges had a long list of misdemeanours against him, foremost among which was the crime of "preaching a malignant sermon in Cambridge against the Parliament," besides the sorrowful fact that they had been "creditably informed of sundry miscarriages" in other pulpit utterances. Upon these grounds Hall was "found unfit" and sent back to Essex. But nothing daunted—and by the probable desire of his strong-minded "Patronesse"—he was soon back at Westminster for another examination. This time, however, he did worse instead of better, and was returned again ; the Assembly being more "unsatisfied" than before. But the irrepressible parson, with Lady Maynard at his back, and the hope of a good living before his eyes, presented himself to the scrutiny of Marshall and his brethren a third time, only to meet with the same result, and try again with hope deferred. At last, after his fifth trial, the divines lost patience, and Hall was "discharged from inter-meddling with Thaxted any more."

No doubt Marshall's influence could have

secured him the coveted post, if he had wished to please Lady Maynard, but the witchery of rank and power was lost upon him. Even the author of the "Godly Man" admits that he was "no Respector of Persons," and would have made an excellent judge, although accusing him at the same time of a grave lack of manners, affirming that "if Knights . . . or Persons of Good Condition" should come where he was sitting, "he would neither stir his Breech, nor his Cap ; it was Condescention enough to give them a gracious nod of the Heade, for his stiff Necke did not often bend,"—which malicious description of clerical deportment is, of course, not to be taken seriously.

But however that may be, the Assembly had not by any means seen the last of the Reverend Samuel Hall. His next move—doubtless at the instigation of Lady Maynard, and by her influence—was to "addresse himselfe" personally to the House of Lords, who took a favourable view of his case and sent an order for yet another examination. It only resulted as before with the disappointing verdict of "returned unfit" ; whereupon the Lords, evidently taking Hall's part, ordered the Assembly to "make good their charges." For this purpose two or three of the divines, with Stephen Marshall as spokesman, attended at the "Lorde's Barre," where they "produced reasons," and in spite of all opposi-

tion flatly refused to pass the persevering *protégé* of Lady Maynard. Even then, the Lords would not finally accept their decision, but referred "the same to a committee," which being afterwards "laide aside, no more was heard of Hall for the space of two months."

This occurred on June 4, 1647. Shortly afterwards both Houses broke up, re-assembling at the end of July, but without their Speakers, who had meanwhile joined the victorious army under Fairfax, then marching upon London. All was chaos and disorder. But it would be "out of the rode of my story heere" to enter into the fruitless efforts made by the Speakerless Parliament, to uphold law and order against the coming military despotism—a struggle in which they were nobly seconded by the presbyterian divines. It is enough to record that in the general confusion Hall saw his opportunity, and taking advantage of the absence of the Speakers, obtained on August 3 an order from the House of Lords for "institution and induction" to Thaxted living, "by the procurement of Lord Maynard," then acting as patron on behalf of his mother.

Unhappily the news of the short-lived victory came too late for Lady Maynard to enjoy, even if it ever reached her dying ears at Easton Lodge. For only two days elapsed after the order was granted before the militant old dame passed to where theological wranglings cease from troubling,



and where earth's fighters are at rest. Her epitaph tells us, that after viewing with satisfaction "an only son and five excellent daughters" so "adorned with their Parent's Virtues as to excite the envy of mankind, she followed her Husband to Heaven, there to enjoy again his Amiable and most Happy Company among the Saints on the 5th day of August, in the year of our Lord, 1647."

But the troubles of Hall were not over, for when, upon the entry of Fairfax into London, the Houses again re-assembled with their truant Speakers, one of their first acts was to pass a measure making null and void all orders and ordinances carried in the absence of the Speakers, covering the time from July 6 to August 6. Notice was sent at once to the sequestrators to eject Hall from the living and prohibit him from preaching; and these worthies, acting upon their instructions, proceeded the next Sunday morning to the church door, armed with their "Ordinance" from Parliament, and awaited the arrival of the Reverend Samuel, who presently appeared attended by two of his supporters—Nitingale the Mayor, and Henry Jebb, the "Towne Clerke." Perhaps the imperious spirit of Lady Maynard may have lingered on that Sabbath day by the porch of Thaxted Church and animated the disdainful contempt with which all three men treated the representatives of the law. For upon their producing their Ordinance and curtly bidding the



offender to "take notice of it," the "Mayor reade the same" . . . and coolly remarked . . . "What doth this concern Mr. Hall?" His pretended innocence was enlightened by the impudent parson himself, who "in a slighting manner saide, this did nothing concern him," and walked away with open defiance into the church, where he "officiated the same day, forenoone, and afternoone, without taking any notice of the said Ordinance." Henry Jebb was even more insulting, for he not only echoed the satirical question—"What doth this concerne Mr. Hall?"—but also told the sequestrators "They were always troubling them with such frivolous things."

The next move was another appeal to the House of Lords, this time from the sequestrators, with the result that the chief delinquents were ordered to appear at the bar. After some delay the Lords gave judgment that "Samuel Hall should not officiate at Thaxted any more," and that "Henry Jebb, for contemptuous words," should pay a visit to the Fleet during their pleasure.

On the very day—September 24—that this was passed in Westminster the little county town was listening to the last pulpit ministrations of its unfortunate vicar within Thaxted Church, and witnessing the final and fiery conflict between the authorities and his admirers. The clouds began to gather in the morning, for when Hall,

accompanied by the Mayor, and "others of the dis-affected party," arrived at the Church, the sequestrators—foolishly endeavouring to make a show of their power—again tried to stop him, demanding his "Authority," which he not only refused to give, but "said they should not question it, and went and preached the forenoone."

There the sequestrators would have been wise to have left matters pending the arrival of the Lords' verdict, but anxious to regain their injured dignity, and having no Lady Maynard to suppress their small sense of officialdom, they took the false step of going again to church that same afternoon, and taking possession of the "Deske" in order to forcibly prevent Hall from preaching. So when that reverend individual—with Nitin-gale the Mayor and "divers of the dis-affected party"—arrived upon the scene, and found the high place of divinity occupied by the enemy, an unseemly wrangle ensued within the venerable walls of the sacred building. The sequestrators again demanded Hall's "Authority," and producing in triumph their precious document, they called upon him "to show a better," but only to meet with disdainful retorts.

Then signs began to be manifested amid the congregation of the coming storm, and although at present the parson's supporters nursed their wrath in sullen mutterings, yet it might perchance be noted that even some pious dames clenched

their fists and glared dangerously at the desecrated "Deske." The climax was reached when Christopher Tanner the churchwarden and Edward Muntford called upon the sequestrators to surrender, adding that "if they would not come downe, they should be pulled down . . . with other daring words. Then came the Mayor out of his seate, and reprovved the sequestrators, and saide hee wondered . . . they should make such a disturbance." At these words the fierce tempest of human passion broke loose and the excited partisans of Hall arose in a body, marched upon the "Deske," and vigorously assaulted the foe. To use the shocked words of the old record, "Divers dis-affected men und women fell violently upon the saide Sequestrators ; Beate them sore ; tore the Haire from their Heads ; their Bandes from their Neckes, and their Hattes and Cloakes off."

The good ladies who figure in this exhibition of muscular Christianity appear to have especially distinguished themselves ; the men combatants—including a certain Nathaniel Smith, whose nickname was "Baby"—doing little beyond "animating and abetting them." From the velvet cushions of his seat, the Mayor calmly surveyed the scene, never reprovving any, nor charging them to keep the peace. Moreover, when some "pressed toward" the sequestrators, with intent to go to their rescue, he said "Let them alone,

and let the Women settle the case." At length, hatless and cloakless, with dishevelled hair, and covered with grievous bruises, the wretched victims fled down the spacious nave of Thaxted Church, only thankful to escape with their lives from the fury of the feminine fists.

We hear no more of them after this undignified retreat, except the bare fact that they laid the sad story of their wrongs before the House of Lords. But the members had weightier matters to look into, and may also have considered that personal correction administered by capable women might form a salutary lesson for their future guidance. At any rate, they only ordered Nitingale to "attende them" the next day, released Henry Jebb and all the persons previously complained of, and took no proceedings whatever against the assailants of the sequestrators. Parson Hall's eloquent tongue was silenced in gaol until October 1, when he made due submission and was released, becoming the minister of the tiny village of Little Saling, where he was described in 1650 as an "able preacher." He was subsequently presented to the living of Great Bardfield, and it is to be hoped passed the rest of his life in peace with all mankind. But the place he had so longed for and struggled to obtain was never to be his, and Thaxted knew him no more.

Mistress Anne Meade, Mistress Porter, Mistress Westly, and Mistress Salmon—that gallant band



of non-passive resisters—had after all lost their day. Yet it may well be that oftentimes as they sat in the old church, devoutly meditating upon matters of “eternal concernment,” their thoughts would wander back to that memorable scene on a bygone Sabbath day, in which they were the chief actors. Did they console themselves, after the manner of the age, with the pious reflection that at least they had been chosen vessels to render unto sinful men the just recompense of their misdeeds, even as the Lord delivered Sisera into the hands of a woman? We cannot tell. Their brave hearts and ready hands have been so long ago laid to rest in the quiet churchyard, and it is difficult now to realise that wild tumult of tongues and fists in the solemn stillness that pervades Thaxted church. It is useless to linger then amid the lofty columns; even the weird twilight will not conjure up for us the ghostly forms of mighty Mistress Anne and her friends, nor the parson for whom they fought so well. Their sleep of peace is not to be disturbed by our curiosity; let us “draw the curtains about them, and proceed to other matters.”

While the villages and small country towns were being torn asunder by factious quarrels, the fatal war raging in the larger world outside was dragging on its disastrous course. An appointment that came to Marshall in connection with it was that of chaplain to the King, during



his stay as state prisoner at Holmby House. Here, in company with Joseph Caryl, Marshall offered spiritual ministrations for five months, being awarded the sum of £500 from the Parliament for his services. They were naturally unwelcome to the fallen King, who refused to attend the sermons, and resented the cooling of his food during the interminable function of a presbyterian grace. We are told how, upon one such occasion when Marshall was "beginning to say Grace for his Majesty, and while he was long in Forming his Chaps (as his manner was) his Majesty said Grace for himself and was fallen to his Meate, and had eaten up some parte of his Dinner before his Chaplain had ended his Blessing the Creature. The King then checking him, and saying that he intended not to stay until his Meate was cold while he stood whistling for the Spirit, which check never went out of his Stomach."

The enemies of Stephen Marshall appear to have especially rejoiced over any circumstances that wounded his self-esteem, and the same writer records with equal delight the story of a passage of arms between him and his sister, then married to the Rev. Thomas Newman, of Hyman, in Norfolk. For it befell that the brother and sister being present together at some distinguished social gathering, Stephen was mischievous enough to tell the homely parson's wife before some

gentlemen "that she looked like a Witch in a Play." But sister Newman also possessed the gift of ready wit, and turning to a lady, she remarked, in the audible tones peculiar to the Marshall family, "that the Worlde was well amended with her Brother since the time he and she us'd to goe a-Gleaning together, when hee would cudgel her coate, if she did not ply her Businesse."

This implication of petty vanity is contradicted by Firmin, who relates how he had often heard Marshall say in prayer : " Lord, some of us thou hast raised from the Dunghill " with reference to his " meane parentage." Yet it were small wonder if satisfied ambition at this period filled his mind with exalted ideas of his own importance ; few men could stand the test of attaining to such distinction in so brief a time, and retain " a meeke and quiet spirit." And another honour was awaiting him ; for when, in the autumn of 1648, the Parliament sought out the ablest divines in England for the delicate and important work of conducting the religious section of the Newport Treaty, their choice fell upon Stephen Marshall, in company with Caryl, Seaman, and Vines.

The four theological commissioners appear to have played their difficult part with great tact, and succeeded in obtaining important concessions from Charles that were anyhow acceptable to themselves, and satisfactory to such as Richard

Baxter and puritans of his wider and more moderate school. But any faint hopes of a peaceable settlement were soon to be dashed to the ground, for even while the divines had been exhorting and persuading, the footsteps had been daily drawing nearer of Cromwell's legion of Ironsides—men who held in equal contempt both Parliamentary authority and Assembly divinity. In defiance of both they appeared before the walls of Carisbrook Castle, abruptly ending the treaty negotiations by seizing the King and carrying him off as their prisoner to Hurst Castle, in Hampshire.

In vain the Houses demanded the replacement of their royal captive. The army—representing a host of fierce and turbulent sects—defied them, threatening to march upon London and demand their pay. The Houses then denounced them as traitors ; whereupon the insubordinate victors of Naseby carried their word into effect, and within a few days the military tramp was heard through the city.

But the details of this revolution cannot be entered into here. It is only as regards Marshall and the party to which he belonged that it is due to his memory and theirs to bear in mind that the reformers of 1642 were not the Army despots of 1648. A reign of force had set in, and the sectaries held the field, while the presbyterians, who, with all their narrowness, were the true suc-

cessors of the older puritans, had lost their hold upon the people. Their influence would have still been considerable over the Parliament, but that body was soon reduced to submission by Cromwell's drastic method of imprisoning forty-five of its members, and excluding ninety-six more, until it degenerated into the passive instrument of his will.

Upon December 28, 1648, the Act was introduced for the "erecting of a High Court of Justice for trying of Charles Stuart, King of England." Several Essex names were among those selected, but with the exception of Lord Grey and Richard Deane of Havering Atte Bower, none would affix their signatures to the death warrant, and most of them refused to act. Among the latter was John Meade's cousin, Sir John Barrington, and Sir Edward Bainton, who had married into the loyal family of the Maynards.

No body of men came out more nobly at this dark period of history than the presbyterians. With everything to lose, and nothing to gain, they not only refused to give any sanction to the impending doom of the King, but actively opposed it at all risks. In vain the army attempted to gain even their neutrality, and when Hugh Peters was sent to the Assembly to invite Marshall, Calamy, and others to a conference with the military Council, they not only refused to attend, but drew up instead a courageous protest in the form



of an "Admonition" against the iniquity of the intended deed.

"Instead of consulting with you," wrote the indignant divines, "we earnestly entreat you as Ambassadors of Christe, that you would consider of the evill of your present ways, and turne from them." They pointed out that "murthering of Kings" was "a jesuitical device," and its success no plea for its justice ; going on to say "God's suffering men to prosper in their evill courses is one of his severest Judgements. . . . None can oblige men to sin. . . . Recede from this your evil way and learn John Baptiste's lesson to his soldiers. . . . If you persist be sure your sin will find you out. . . . We have discharged our duty, and we hope delivered our Soules . . . but we hope better things of you, and subscribe ourselves your Servants in the Lord."

The protest, signed by forty-seven London ministers, was followed by another in a few days, addressed to "The People," calling upon them to mourn for the sin of the City and the debased Parliament, ending with the prayer that God would grant unto the King "effectual repentance . . . and restrain the violence of men, that they may not draw upon themselves and the Kingdom the Blood of their Sovereigne."

To this was affixed fifty-seven signatures. Stephen Marshall's could not be appended, as he was not of the London province, but that he



assisted to compile the first manifesto is certain, and he doubtless had a hand in the second, which contains the name of his probable son-in-law, John Wall, of St. Michael's, Cornhill. Moreover, his efforts to prevent what he regarded as a national crime did not cease with the publication of the two papers, but were continued to within the last two days of Charles's life, as we learn from Giles Firmin, who was in London at the time, and probably staying with his friend.

"Mr. Marshall," he says, "was to have preached twice the Lord's day before, yet he was so troubled about the King's death that before his preaching (as I remember) he went to the Principal Heads of the Army, and laboured to save the King. For a rational Clear Head, and a suasive Faculty few men exceeded him, and had it not been for one whom I will not name he had persuaded Cromwell to save the King. This is Truth."

It is regrettable that Giles gives us no clue whatever to the identity of that stern opponent of pity. But whoever it was, the mission was a splendid failure. The doom of the King was sealed.

There is no written evidence that Marshall was present at the execution, which took place upon the following Tuesday. But it may be taken almost

as a certainty that both Firmin and he witnessed the final act in the long tragedy, and heard that deep unearthly groan of horror from twelve thousand voices described by Philip Henry, as the sound was heard of the fallen axe that sent the royal victim to a higher tribunal, where justice is incorruptible and mercy infinite.

## CHAPTER IV

“Post tenebras, spero lucem.”

*Inscription on ancient pall, Sudbury.*

“Beyond these voices, there is peace.”—*Tennyson.*

A SILENCE follows in the life of Stephen Marshall.

There is nothing to show how he spent the year of miserable discord that followed upon that scene on Whitehall scaffold, but it was doubtless at his London post, witnessing the bitter failure of the cause for which he had given the best part of his talents and his life. The presbyterian system that had been slowly established with such infinite pains, and over which so many months and years of weary debate had been spent, was fast hastening to its downfall. Only two months after the death of Charles the new army government sent an order to the presbyterian divines, who had hitherto exercised such unbounded political influence, forbidding them ever again to allude in their preaching to State affairs.

Through the kingdom the Assembly became more unpopular every day. The multitude of

new sects—Levellers, and others described by Baxter as "fierce with pride and self assertiveness," poured contempt upon the more sober and old-fashioned puritans, calling them "Dryvines," and "Dissembly Men." A reign of religious insubordination had set in, reaching even unto the Essex village of Finchingfield.

And there Marshall found it awaiting him, when, in the spring of 1650, he bade farewell to the scenes of his brilliant public life, and returned to take up again the simple duties of a village pastor.

There is no trace of discord in the records of the old "Towne Booke," as once more we see Stephen's curious signature at the Easter vestry for that year. The parish accounts were in the same excellent order as when he had been present eight years previously. Some "Churche reparation" work had been carried out by Mr. Tim, the churchwarden, whose statement of expenditure showed that the plumber had been paid £2 ; the carpenter, £6 ; while the bricklayer had received 2s. 6d. for each "daye's" work. Four hundred bricks, and twenty pavements had been bought, and the total cost, with lime at 6d. per basket, sand, and wood from "Goodman Loker," came to £37. This had been paid for by a "towne" rate, which contained a small surplus, so that Mr. Tim was able to invest in a new bellrope. Edward Bendlowes, of Brent Hall, was behindhand with

his subscriptions—probably a usual event with that impecunious poet—owing the churchwardens upon this occasion 13s. 4d. for “moneys belonging to the Church,” with the same sum “for the poore per annum,” and apparently continued to owe it. The other defaulters paid their dues, including £2 13s. 7d. interest money upon “Towne Stock,” which was handed over by Edward Choate to John Glascock for “amendinge the Rails of the Churchyard.” The poor rate had not fallen off; the overseers reporting that they had collected “for the reliefe of the poore” £120 1s. 9d. during 1649. New officers were appointed for the year 1650; Sir Robert Kempe, Edward Bendlowes, and John Meade being chosen as “Surveyors of the High-Wayes.”

A “Meetinge of the Townsmen” was held on “December ye sixt” of the same year, to consider a case that throws an interesting side-light upon the Poor Law of that time, when “idlenesse” was a thing by no means to be allowed. For, as we have seen, if a man possessed strength and capacity to labour, and only lacked willingness, he was treated to the whip first, and given the work afterwards; but if he showed both capacity and willingness, and the lack of employment was through no fault of his, it was found for him without that preliminary incentive to an industrious life.

Upon this occasion, there seems every reason to



suppose that the unemployed in question were of the latter type. The curious part of the transaction lies in the fact that they were not Finchingfield men, but natives of the parish of Bocking, eight miles distant. Probably work was unattainable in those parts, and roving about in search of it was not allowed ; it being considered unlawful for any to be a so-called "vagabond" as to be a "lazierogue," and the whipping post was the recognised hospitality for both classes. So an agreement had to be made with the Finchingfield "Townsmen," by "Order from ye Justices," whereby five labourers were "appointed to be set on worke and be allowed tenpence a day, proportionally born by ye Parish." It was also agreed that the overseers should "make a rate for ye same," and lodging accommodation was provided for the strangers, a proviso being added that "every one who shall not consent to keepe one of ye men for so many daies as his proportion comes to should make this deficiency good in money so rated."

At the same meeting "divers new erected Cottages and Inmates were taken into Consideration," and any one accustomed to the leisurely formality of modern local government, cannot but be impressed with the ready promptness of action that characterised this long bygone village council. We are not told the exact details of this case, but it is evident that the cottages referred to were either considered unsanitary or lacking in suitable

accommodation, and proceedings on behalf of the tenants were taken without delay. A list of the landlords was handed to William Brown and his fellow overseer, with the "desire" to give the delinquents warning to "redresse these things before ye Lady Day next, or else ye Towne are resolved to proceede against them according to Law." Moreover, the overseers were ordered to "return the list" to the townsmen at the next fortnightly meeting, thereby to prove that they had lost no time in carrying out their instructions.

Stephen Marshall signed his name to the above admirable resolution—an object-lesson for rural councils in all generations. It was his last signature in the old "Towne Booke"; its time-stained pages knew him no more. Another meeting was duly held on December the 20th, presided over by Sir Robert Kempe, but Marshall was never present again. In Finchingfield, as at Westminster, his power was broken and his work was done.

It is possible that offence may have been taken by the owners of the unsatisfactory cottages, thus adding to the unfriendly feeling that now existed between their once popular minister and a large proportion of his parishioners. This must be chiefly ascribed to the new spirit of religious turbulence, with its fierce reaction from the presbyterian form of Church government of which Marshall had truly been Primate in all but name. Moreover, he stood in the eyes of his

flock as the embodiment of a lost cause, and a fickle populace has no hosannas wherewith to greet the master builders of theological castles, whose fabrics early crumble into splendid ruins. The fashion of this world passeth away.

The sarcastic old chronicler tells us, how, upon his return to the rural village, Marshall found "neither the Welcome nor Respect to which he was wont." The factious party ascribed mercenary motives for all his actions, telling the famous Divine of whom they were formerly so proud, that "if he could have bettr'd his Maintenance anywhere else, he would have sold them for two pence profit ;" and "instead of sending Tithes when demanded they send him Jeers and Frumps, and rate him above what he could make of his Living," which last act of petty spite may be another reason for his sudden withdrawal from the "Towne" meetings. Also they defied his authority, and "over-ruled him, who was wont to over-rule all men. Not brooking this Carriage, he grew weary."

It was little wonder. Of more than human ingratitude, Marshall must have become weary and heart-sick, as he looked back, like another and a greater preacher, upon all his hands had wrought, and on the labour he had laboured to do, and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit. The fame of pulpit oratory, the glory of political success, the personal popularity, and

the magnetic power whereby he had moulded men unto his will—all was gone “like smoke which is dispensed with a tempest,” and passed away “as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but for a day.”

Yet there is reason to believe that at this gloomy time of dismal failure a higher and a humbler spirit entered into the once brilliant theologian, as, laying his honours low in the dust, he lived the few remaining years of his mortal life for that alone which is unseen and incorruptible. In that kingdom not of this world, “where rust and moth cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal,” lay all the hopes of Stephen Marshall. If his hour of earthly triumph could have returned to him, it would have lost its sweetness; it would have failed to satisfy and

Still the soul turned to that Godhead dear,  
Stretching great arms out to us from His cross.

It was during this dark passage through the valley of humiliation that Marshall received an invitation to go to Ipswich and be minister of St. Mary Quay. This offer had the effect of stirring up his old friends to rally round him, and petition him “with a Scroll of Hands,” not to leave them. But he honestly confessed that he felt he should be of no further use in Finchingfield, where he “could not find any new convert,” although, he added, with pathetic appreciation, “those who were good of olde time are so still.”



However, before the final decision, a "private fast" and gathering for prayer was appointed to be held at the house of his faithful friend John Meade, where three of the ablest neighbouring ministers were invited to petition for guidance on behalf of their fellow pastor, and the eldest of them was appointed to "begin the Devotions." Unfortunately, this happened to be none other than Mr. Daniel Rogers, who cherished an envious grudge to the distinguished rival who not only had obtained many years ago that Finchingfield living so fondly desired by himself, but had attained unto a lofty height of power and fame, while the Lecturer of Weathersfield remains in his country village to expound unto rustic cars the involved horrors of consistent calvinism. The two men, so we are told, "seldom met, but they hunch'd at one another" even at social gatherings. For once "a dish of Apples being brought before them and the Company . . . comparing one Apple before another, Mr. Rogers said he lov'd a Living. I think so, quoth Mr. Marshall; for you are always whining for more. And you, says Mr. Rogers' love a Runnet, for you can never keep at home.'

The Reverend Daniel was a puritan of the narrowest and severest type, and not attractive by nature. "He was a man," says Firmin, "of greate Partes, greate Grace, and greate Infirmities; whose woful temper, or rather distemper, hin-



dered much the lustre of the Grace that was in him." His religious dogmas were a terror unto many, some persons being driven to the verge of insanity by his realistic description of the doom to come, from which no man could escape unless he happened to be of the number of the elect. And, moreover, if the trembling sinners would attain that acceptable frame of mind necessary unto salvation, they must be perfectly willing to accept perdition, if, after due soul-searching examination, it should eventually prove that their names had not been written from all Eternity in the Book of Life, but were recorded in the roll-call of the lost. The unfortunate man tortured himself with scruples, and spent the greater part of his life in deep dejection, worrying over minute trivialities as if they had been deadly sins. One day he went to Giles Firmin in a state of abject misery, because he had been "dining at a Knight's table" (probably Sir Robert Kempe's), "and had not found liberty to season his Meat with savoury and spiritual Discourse." The kindly Giles was filled with compassion at his woful condition, for, as he charitably puts it, "God did handle him strangely," though admitting at the same time that his "pity would have been greater if he had not troubled so many with his doctrine."

Such was the rigid theologian who conducted the prayer meeting in the old manor-house of

Sculpins, and, in spite of his morbid conscience, did not scruple—according to his lights—to improve the occasion. For when the solemn company were upon their knees waiting in quiet reverence to hear fervent intercessions for light upon their pastor's way, and that good man was also in the defenceless position of prayer, Mr. Daniel Rogers seized his opportunity, and instead of making supplications for Divine direction, he offered up to Heaven instead his personal opinion of Mr. Stephen Marshall. No one could reply, as, with true ecclesiastical envy, the bitter religionist prayerfully criticised the life of his more successful fellow minister, who, he said, "lov'd the Company of great Personages, had left his Parish to goe and live at London, and follow the Camp, and would needs now be gone to Ipswich. . . . He hath a gadding humour, O Lord."

Of the effect wrought upon the little congregation by this unusual method of devotion we have no record. Probably it was passed over as the childish naughtiness of an old man, and excused upon the grounds of his failing health, which—taking the form of a "Quartian ague," whereby his head was "so shaken that he scarce ever recovered it again"—deepened the habitual gloom of his disposition. There is little doubt but that Giles Firmin—the "Man of Peace"—was present, and would help to pour whatever oil might be needed upon the troubled waters, but

Marshall and all concerned must have felt more commiseration than anger with the aged minister, whose worn countenance and trembling head bore evident traces of the approaching end. Daniel Rogers only lived a year after the prayer meeting—a prey to “fearful apprehensions” of death, and “no wonder,” says Giles pitifully, “when God was so darke to him.” Yet “when his turne came to goe off the Stage, his Frame was very heavenly, and that which he so much feared he was not sensible of, for the disease taking his Braine, in a Fit he went off, and fell Asleep.”

But by the time of that merciful release Marshall was thirty miles away from Finchingfield, and settled down as the incumbent of St. Mary Quay. In spite of the ungracious conduct of so many of his old parishioners, he manifested a generous affection for the country folk among whom so many of his best years had been spent, by making over certain lands in his possession as charitable benefactions, before leaving the village. A deed was drawn up, bearing the date of “February 20, 1650” (old reckoning), in which he “granted a messuage called Waseys and a piece of Meadow, with a Pightel adjoining thereto called Boyton Meadow, situated in Finchingfield, containing about 3 acres, then producing £4 6s. 8d. per annum, upon trust, that the Churchwardens and Overseers for the time

being, should employ the same in buying and laying in of wood and other necessary fuel for the people of the said Parish, for their necessary relief, as they should think convenient." In 1838 we find this charity, then bringing in the yearly sum of £8, alluded to in an old document from which the above statement is taken, but the money had been diverted from its original purpose, and was being used "wholly towards the repairs of the Church." The little property of "Waseys" is situated in a wild and sparsely inhabited district at the northern extremity of Finchingfield, surrounded with woods and not far from Sculpins. It formerly contained a teneement included in the gift that was used to within recent times as a primitive infectious hospital for small-pox cases, and was known as the "Paste" or "Peste" house.

The salary of the Weathersfield Lecturer had been provided for by Stephen's former benefactor, Willsher, who, in 1634, had handed over for that purpose unto his "adopted son," as trustee, the Finchingfield farm of "Great Wincey," stipulating that the Lecturer "be chosen by twenty of the chief inhabitants or the greater part of them." This trust Marshall held up to the time of his departure for Ipswich, when he resigned his office and placed this "nominal Manor" in the hands of the Weathersfield authorities, the donor himself being no longer there to consult. For ten



years previously, just as the din of war and the strife of tongues were commencing to overshadow the land, "Walter Wiltsher, Yeoman, aet. 77," found his final "refreshing settlement." He never lived to witness either the passing glory of Marshall's public life nor the gloom of its ending, and one feels that it was well. For surely the old man knew him at his best in thinking of him as the human-hearted preacher whose hand had "thrown open the gates of new life to him," and to whom he was wont to say in the quaint phraseology of the seventeenth century, "O Son, if had'st thou not come . . . I had perished."

Such recollections must have made a few drops of sweet in the cup of gall, as, after arranging all parochial matters with his usual capacity, Stephen Marshall bade farewell to the scene of his early days, and looked for the last time upon the old gabled home and the picturesque village green with the peaceful river flowing through its midst, the ancient church towering above all from its lofty position on the summit of the hill, as if pointing upwards unto that world where change and decay enter not.

And so, one spring morning, Finchingfield parted from the greatest of her vicars, for whatever may have been the faults and failings that inevitably spring from the intoxication of a sudden and short-lived fame, yet possibly a prophet had been in her midst, and she knew it not.



Hugh Glover was presented by Sir Robert Kempe to the vacant living, which he retained until his ejection in 1662, when he exchanged his comfortable vicarage for a small residence in the village, abstaining some years from preaching, and attending the church with his family, but in 1669 he was reported as keeping a "Conventicle." A few years later he removed to Bishop's Stortford, where he "dyd of a Consumption." Calamy speaks of him as a "facetious genteel Person, and very popular Preacher, like Mr. Marshall."

Very little is known about Stephen and his ministry at Ipswich, except the fact that he was much appreciated and found many true friends in his new home. He did "more service there in two years than he was like to do in ten at Finchingfield," says Firmin, whose wife's relation, John Ward, lived in the town, and was among those who loved and respected Marshall. A passing gleam of light fell upon his path, and, cheered by human sympathy, it may be that he began to look forward to a quiet and peaceful autumn of his days after all the stormy unrest of former years, hoping that

at last,

such Showers past,

My God would give a Sun-shine after Raine.

But it was not to be.

After about a year's stay in his new home Mar-

shall went up to London, being invited to preach before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen at the "Spittle" Church upon the occasion of their anniversary. This sermon—upon "the unity of the Saints"—is especially interesting, as being the last recorded public utterance of his life, and must be reckoned among his noblest and his best. A marked change had come over his style; the old fire and vital energy had passed away, and left instead the calm and dignified tone of a wiser and sadder man, weary of all "Rents and Divisions," and growing in knowledge and charity as one upon whose eyes the first faint streaks of the eternal dawn were already casting their broadening rays.

In that growing light all petty human differences seem of such little moment; love is the great essential now. "Nothing is worth the keeping that will not let us be one with those with whom Christe is one. . . . While we are here, we shall often see cause to differ in judgment, but we shall never see cause to differ in affection, from those whom Christe loveth. We may be of one heart . . . where we cannot be of one minde . . . the time is coming when we shall be of one minde. Luther and Calvin are of one minde in heaven while their disciples wrangle on earth." Therefore in all "strifes and contentions," he pleads that the "Arbitrator" may be that "Peace of God that passeth all understanding;" and con-

cludes by saying "If wee doe contend, let us contend who shall be most holy, who shall bear most, who shall love most, untill that blessed Day, when Christ's Light shall shine so perfectly . . . that wee shall bee of one mind, and one heart in all things."

Such was the preacher's last sermon of which we have any knowledge. It was published by Stephen Bowtel at the sign of the Bible in Pope's Head Alley, and may have been read and cherished by some kindred spirits, while in other pious breasts it would only excite feelings of bitterness and wrath ; toleration being to many a devout puritan as "the Fundamental design of the Devil," and the means whereby he "would lay a foundation for his kingdom throughout all Generations." But Stephen had learnt otherwise ; sorrow, and the overshadowing hand of the Angel of Death had taught him a higher meaning in the story of the Cross.

Only twice again do we find the name of Stephen Marshall in connection with public matters, one occasion being in 1654, when he sat upon Cromwell's committee for "Fundamentals." Baxter was also nominated, bringing forward as his scheme for Christian unity the simple acceptance of the ten commandments, the two Creeds, and the Lord's Prayer—a broad basis that no doubt met with Marshall's hearty approval, but was received with much disfavour by the narrow

theologians who, led by Owen, formed the majority. No satisfactory conclusion was arrived at, the little Assembly, after much wrangling, merely printing twenty propositions for a Parliament too near its dissolution to pay any heed thereto. Baxter unfolded his views to Cromwell before the Privy Council, listening with scanty patience to the "tedious, but meere ignorant" speeches of the Protector ; after which, as he tells us, "all came to nothing, and that labour was lost." He speaks with high approbation of Marshall, whom he now met for the first time—calling him a "worthy sober man," and adding that if "all the Bishops had been of the same spirit as Archbishop Usher, the Independant like Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs and the Presbyterians like Mr. Steven Marshall, the divisions of the Church would soone have been healed."

Marshall was also chosen to be one of those Commissioners who met in Whitehall for the purpose of inquiring into the doctrine and preaching capacity of the clergy, sending forth their sub-commissioners—among whom were John Meade and Hugh Glover—to search their different districts for doubtful or unorthodox ministers. Also any candidates for the clerical profession had first to be subjected to their theological examination, the nature of their queries being fitly represented by the following specimen ; "Is regeneration a Substance or an Accident, and in what Predicament?"



A certain Mr. Sadler wished to enter the ministry, but was first asked to decide whether the fall of Adam was caused by the willingness or unwillingness on the part of the Creator. The unfortunate man pondered long over the momentous problem, the correct solution of which meant so much to his prospects, and then cautiously replied : " I conceive, with submission to your judgment, that there may have been a willing unwillingness." The answer was not deemed sufficiently calvinistic ; Mr. Sadler was rejected.

It is not surprising that Marshall, although appointed to sit upon this despotic tribunal, apparently took little or no part in its proceedings. He would have had scant sympathy with its hard and bitter theology, and by this time was a premature old man, worn out with physical ill-health and domestic trials. Darkly fell the shadows around his path as life's little day waned to its earthly close. Gout attacked him, gradually depriving him of the entire use of his hands, while one bereavement after another took from him in a short space of time those he loved the best. His only son—the " Steven " born in the old Finchingfield Vicarage—was drowned at Hamburg ; and then, in quick succession, he lost three daughters, the wives of William Venter, John Wall, and John Nye. Nye had obtained the valuable living of Cottenham, in Cambridgeshire, from Crom-

well's son-in-law, Peter French ; who, in his turn, had forcibly seized it from a royalist vicar in 1641. It formed a very abode of death to Nye, who, says Walker, "bury'd his wife there, and all the Children born in that house, who were about six."

To crown all these calamities, Mrs. Marshall soon followed her children and grandchildren to the grave. Little is known of this puritan lady, but enough to reveal a fair and kindly soul, with a wise business capacity, and distaste of political strife. She probably passed away at Ipswich, but all details of her death are as obscure as her life, and it can only be known with any certitude that about this time, and following closely upon the other sorrows, the "quiet Susanna" attained her peaceful rest.

We are told that the heaviest blow of all to Stephen Marshall was the loss of his only son, thus suddenly snatched away in the vigour of his early manhood. Then, one by one, the hand of death had beckoned to his sisters, and to his gentle mother, and they had followed the lad into that silent land, where human eyes could no longer behold them, nor human ears catch an echo of their voices, until in due time this mortal should also put on immortality.

He that hath found some wild bird's neste may know  
At first sighte, if the birde be flowne,  
But what fair dell or grove he sings in now,  
That is to him unknowne.

Yet, perhaps, in hours of weakness and weariness, when the veil wears thin between the failing body and the imperishable substance, and senses beyond those of flesh appear almost available, the stricken man might also feel :

I see them walking in an aire of glory,  
Whose light doth trample on my dayes—  
My dayes, which are at best but dull and hoary,  
Meere glimmerings and decayes.

The "decayes" were only too evident to all who knew him ; Marshall would not have many months to wait before he too should cross the "River that hath no Bridge," and learn the great secret of the other side.

His illness was one of those maladies that gradually sap the life away, leaving the able brain unimpaired to the end. The medical diagnosis of those days records that he was "visited with a Consumption, long and tedious, which made him a very Skeleton." Giles Firmin journeyed all the way from Shalford, leaving his parish in other hands, to be the physician and stay of his old friend as long as life should last, taking him up to London for further advice.

But before starting on this journey the invalid made his Will. He describes himself as "Stephen Marshall of Ipswich in the County of Suffoulke, unworthy minister of the Gospill," and declares the document to be "my last Will and Testament

for the settling of my worldly estate in manner and forme following."

The three sons-in-law who had lately lost their wives are first thought of ; William Venter and John Nye each receiving "the sume of one hundred and forty pounds to be disposed of and improved for the comfort" of the grandchildren, and John Wall the "sume of one hundred pounds" with directions that it is to "be improved for his child by my daughter." The "library of bookes and all written notes" are to "bee devided beetweene the aboue named sonnes in law Master Venter, Master Nye, and Master Wall," under the condition that the three surviving daughters "shall haue liberty to choose only such English Bookes as thay like for their owne vse to the value of twenty or thertie a peece for each." Jane, the wife of Peter Smith, is to retain the "siluer pot in her keeping" ; Susanna—the only unmarried daughter—is given "my little Silver watch," while "sonne and daughter Langham" take the "striking silver clocke."

Only members of the family are mentioned in will, with one exception ; "vnto loueing friend Mr. John Ward"—the relation of Firmin—is bequeathed an evident treasure, the "deaths head ring of gold." Ipswich library is to receive five pounds. "Sister Newman" and her family are not forgotten ; small legacies are left them ranging from ten pounds to two pounds, John Wall being directed to pay the same to the younger children "when



they attaine the yeares of 21." All the legacies—including the "sume of ten pounds" to an unknown kinswoman, Jane Wood—are to be paid within six months of the testator's decease. The rest of goods and chattels unbequeathed are to be equally divided among the daughters, who are moreover constituted and appointed "joynt Executrix." Then, with a caution rendered sadly necessary by the subsequent conduct of Susanna and Mary, Marshall adds, "Moreouer I doe appoint and intreat my son in law Peter Smith to be supervisors of this my last will and testament. And the rather because in his hand and trust is most of that worldly estate which god hath lent mee."

A last "desire" is on behalf of the sister with whom he used to "goe a-gleaning" in the far off days of boyhood. Besides her legacy afore mentioned, the five sons-in-law and Susanna are each requested to pay her a pound yearly "as long as shee liveth, which is six pounds per ann, amongst them all." Did Sister Newman ever benefit by this annuity? It is very doubtful.

All last wishes being set down in due legal form, the simply worded document closes with the following declaration: "In testimony that this is my last will I haue hereunto set my hand and seale the day and yeare aboue written, STEPHEN MARSHALL."

The property alluded to as that "which god

hath lent mee " appears to have been of considerable value, and it was one of the taunts of his enemies that he had "created an Estate worth ten thousand pounds," a goodly heritage in those days for a puritan minister to have amassed. Yet according to Firmin's account, Marshall set little store upon wealth, and in reference to it would oftentimes say, "What I never sought of God, that God hath throwne me in ; but what I have sought, that He hath denied me."

The business of the will being concluded, and the parochial duties of his church provided for, there was no need to delay the journey any longer, so together the two friends set out, travelling by easy stages. The straight Roman road from Ipswich to London would take them by Manningtree—leaving to the right the beautiful vale of Dedham—on to Colchester, described by John Evelyn at this period as a "faire towne, but wretchedly demolished by the late siege, having faire meadows on one side, and a river with an antient castle,"—then through Kelvedon and Witham to the county town of Chelmsford, entering London by way of Romford and Stratford.

The spirits of Marshall revived in the fresh autumn air of the open country, and a sense of peace and joy filled his heart. "I never took a journey with more Pleasure and Profit," says Giles, "having so cheerful a Companion." It was

a break in the clouds at eventide, giving promise of clear shining beyond. Stephen did well to be glad as he saw the end in sight of a longer and more toilsome journey, and felt himself drawing very near to the rest of "that long Night, which is indeed our Day."

Upon one occasion, as the two worthies were enlivening their way by "propounding cases of conscience," they were joined by a fellow traveller, who held converse with them upon the solemn subject of death, and being evidently an individual possessed by spiritual conceit, boasted that his life had been so spotless and free from sin, that for him the last enemy had no terrors. When the next stage was reached, the good physician, looking upon his friend in a "dying condition," considered it his duty to discourse further upon the matter, and question him as to whether he too could say the same.

"No," said the sick man sadly, as he looked back upon many a fault and many an error in the irreparable past, "I cannot say as he, that I have not so lived that I should be afraid to dye." Then with humble confidence, he added his simple confession of faith. "This I can say; I have so learnt Christ, that I am not afraid to dye."

The hour draws near, howe'er delayed and late,  
When, at the Eternal Gate,  
We leave the words and works we call our own,  
And lift void hand alone

For love to fill. Our emptiness of soul  
Brings to that Gate no toll;  
Giftless we come to Him, who all things gives,  
And live because He lives.

At length the weary journey was over and, with the faithful Firmin by his side, Stephen Marshall entered London for the last time. Never more, as in bygone days, would he play his distinguished part in pulpit oratory or political debate ; no vast crowds in the Abbey or St. Margaret's would ever again hang spellbound upon his burning words. Yet, perhaps, as all his eventful past rose before his dying eyes, he may have rightly felt that, after all, the highest part of it lay in those quiet bygone years spent in the country village. For the recollection of gratified ambition is at its best but a loveless retrospect, and not to be compared with such deeds as the shedding of a great light upon darkened human hearts like William Kempe's and old Dame Meade's. Therein lay the true glory of the preacher's life, to abide as an incorruptible inheritance when all else had faded away.

His friends gathered round him and did all that was possible for his comfort during the short period of earthly life that remained. The devoted Giles never left him, ministering to his crippled and wasted body and rendering all the consolation possible as the suffering man entered the dark valley. Even now the end of his trials and disappointments were not over, and his last days



were harassed by the dishonourable conduct of his own children.

For it is sad to have to record that, with the exception of Jane Smith, the surviving daughters proved unworthy of their great father, and were anything but a credit to his memory in after years. We read in Pepys' "Diary" how they became celebrated actresses at the King's Theatre under the nicknames of "Beck" and "Anne," and how "Beck" was equally noted for her "mighty fine" acting, her "pretty and noble" looks, and her laxity of morals, the shamelessness of her life being all the less excusable because—as Nell Gwyn once reminded her during a "falling out" over their love intrigues—she was "a Presbyterian's praying daughter."

Even at this time of mortal illness the unnatural women, with no feeling for their parent's distress, did not scruple to raise money upon a portion of the inheritance that would be theirs at his death by means of a clever and dishonest trick. In company with the three "sonnes-in-law" they prevailed upon Peter Smith to hand over one hundred pounds to each of them, making a total of five hundred pounds, in return for which he received a bogus document, pretending to convey to him "all their estate and interest in Waies in Finchfield"; so that at the testator's decease Peter would have lost his money and could not reclaim his property, the paper being illegally drawn up.

The tidings of this disgraceful transaction came to Marshall's ears as he lay prostrate with weakness, earth's scenes and turmoils drifting far away. It was the last drop to be drained in the bitter cup ere his fainting lips should taste of the healing fruits of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

At the gate of death, Marshall aroused himself, and, collecting all his powers of mind and body, composed a concise and clear-headed codicil to his will. No word of reproach is uttered, but the command is imperative : "I doe declare my desire to be that euery of them to whom my sonne Smith hath paid a hundred pounds . . . shall repay it againe to him . . . and he shall giue vp all the estate to them that he had from them I being assured that the same is not well conveyed in law. And if they shall faile in repayment . . . within one month of my decease Then the said Peter Smith shall deteyne in his hands fiue hundred pounds of the legacies."

Two pathetic inaccuracies occur in the wording of this paper, the sick man speaking of his daughter, Mrs. Langham, as "Mary Marshall," and mentioning the "wiues" of the three widowed "sonnes in law" as if they had been still living, probably thinking of all in the light of long-past happier days.

The codicil terminates in similar phraseology to that used in the will, and is dated "this twelveth

day of November In the yeare of our Lord sixteene hundred fifty and fiue." But the once strong right hand was too crippled to render any signature possible, and we read instead : " The Marke of Mr. Stephen Marshall," followed by a pitifully feeble cross.

It was the last struggle to be made, the last sorrow to be borne. The road wound uphill to the very end, but the summit was nearly reached now, and the kindly Death-Angel was close at hand. Only another week remained of weary waiting, and the chequered voyage of mortal life was over. Within the still waters of the Eternal Haven Stephen Marshall "slept quietly in the Lord."

Westminster Abbey opened her doors to render the last honours to the great preacher whose mighty voice had so often echoed within her venerable walls, and on November 23, 1655, his wasted remains—"with great solemnity"—were reverently laid to rest amid the royal tombs on the south side of Edward the Confessor's Chapel. The dust of the peasant's son mingled with that of England's statesmen and kings.

But the petty animosity of party spite, so often provoked by the militant puritan during his lifetime, followed him beyond the grave, and the stillness of that last repose in the ancient vaults

was not allowed to remain undisturbed. For during that period of wild reaction that followed immediately upon the restoration, when even the bodies of notable antagonists were not respected, an order was sent from Charles II to the Dean of Westminster, commanding him to carry out what Stanley has aptly called "the violent extirpation of the illustrious dead." Twenty coffins were exhumed, Marshall's being one of the number, and cast into a pit dug at the back-door of one of the two prebendal houses then standing on what is now the open space between the Abbey and St. Margaret's Church. And so, somewhere in an unknown grave under the green turf, with the roar of a greater London ever sounding above him, lies all that is mortal of Stephen Marshall.

No monumental record exists to tell his fame, either at Westminster or in that quiet country parish where his very name is almost forgotten. It matters little. The best tribute to his memory lies in the simple utterance of human affection, handed down across the centuries by Giles Firmin, the "Man of Peace" :

I Loved him Dearely while he lived ;  
I Honour him Greately now that he is dead.

More than thirty years elapsed after the passing of Marshall before his faithful comrade followed him into the unseen world, there, let us hope, to



take up again the broken thread of friendship  
where alone earth's dark enigmas can find their  
solution, and where the souls of the righteous  
are in the Hand of God.

There shall wee meete to mixe againe, and met,  
'Tis last Good Night; that Sunne shall never set.

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- (12) Holman's MS. History of Essex, in Colchester Museum
- (13) History and Antiquities of the County of Essex, 1760-68
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- (15) *The History of Later Puritans*, by J. B. Marsden, 1852
- (16) *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in Essex*, by J. W. Davids, 1863
- (17) *A History of the English Church during the Commonwealth*, by W. A. Shaw, 1900
- (18) *Local Parish Records and Registers*

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*E. V.*







